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A NOVEL

BY

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IT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

CHAPTER I.

"Is it still raining, Frieda?" asked a feeble voice.

A girl rose from the bedside where she was keeping watch and went wearily to the window.

She lifted up the curtain, looked out into one of the dullest of the dull streets of Augsburg, and saw the thick gray drops plashing remorselessly upon the roofs and pavement. For some seconds she gazed, motionless, at the leaden sky; then her hand fell heavily to her side; she turned slowly, almost automatically; came back, with unsteady steps, to the seat she had just quitted, and as she sank into it, answered faintly, "Yes, grandmother, it is still raining."

"Sad without, sad within," murmured the feeble voice.

Then there was long silence.

The room was cheerless. A bed, a table, a chest of drawers, a wash-stand, and three straw chairs composed its furniture; all were rickety and discolored, but clean. Against the wall hung a dingy oval mir-

ror, with a broken frame. A bottle of medicine and a rose in a glass of water were on the table.

In the bed lay a wan old woman.

On one of the straw chairs sat the girl she had called Frieda, her eyes closed, her head sinking, her arms drooping.

Once more the old woman spoke, with difficulty and with intense sadness, "You have to face it, Frieda. Yes, you have to face it. My poor Frieda!"

She moaned and was silent again.

Frieda made no reply; but her shoulders seemed to shrink a little.

After a while the sick woman fell asleep.

Hearing the deeper breathing, the girl opened her eyes, and, softly, though with an effort rose. For a minute she stood still, staring at the ground. Then she muttered to herself, "This is my life! This! My darling grandmother is dying, and I am to remain alone—alone in want and degradation. Misery yesterday—misery to-day—greater misery to-morrow! Where can I turn for hope? Is hope permitted to an outcast?"

Suddenly she raised her head. For an instant her eyes sought, almost wildly, for light in the future. Then all collapsed again, and with a low sob she fell once more upon the chair.

Countess Frieda von Rothenfels was the last of a decayed race of the Old March of Brandenburg, which in other days had given many soldiers to Prussia. Her mother had died when she was born; her father had been killed during the siege of Strasburg, leaving her penniless. Her grandmother, the sole relation she possessed, had taken charge of her, and (being a

Bavarian and a Catholic) had fixed their home at Augsburg. By prodigies of self-denial and economy which are possible nowhere but in Germany, she had managed not only to subsist, but to give Frieda a good education, and even to lay by money, on the pension of £150 a year which she received as widow of a major-general. That pension, their only income, would disappear with the old lady, and then Frieda would have to earn her bread as best she could. It was to this situation that her grandmother had alluded when she said, "You have to face it;" it was this situation that made Frieda feel she was an outcast—an outcast at twenty-three years old.

Her nature—impressionable, excitable, enthusiastic—was intensely German, with exaggerations proper to herself. Like many other German girls, she found motives of fervid emotion in the smallest occurrences, and saw thrilling beauties in the most ordinary objects; like many others, she was easy to offend, about everything and nothing; like many others, she was passionately proud of her birth and nationality; like many others, she was a dreamer. In each of these tendencies she was excessive; above all, in dreaming. Dreaming was the distinctive feature, the special mark, of her character; it was not only a tendency of her mind, a satisfaction of her aspirations after the unknown beautiful, it was also her refuge in distress. Her life was so full of pain that, to escape from its sorrows, she sought a hiding-place in her inner fancies, where she built up forgetfulness, and drifted, far away, to what she called "das begeisternde Seelenleben." Her conception of being, of its uses and its meanings, was to

seek for idealism alone, to fly from contact with reality; in reality she found a merciless enemy, in idealism a succoring friend; in the actualities of her life she encountered things as they are, in dreams she saw them as they might be. Her conviction of the value of her imaginings was so earnest that she scarcely even wished to carry them into execution; it sufficed to her that they existed; and if they could have gone on existing, without interruption from the hard hand of outer things, she would have asked no more; her one necessity was to dream on undisturbed. Enjoyment, in her eyes, had grown to consist in picturing, not in possessing; picturing was a product of her own will, possessing was beyond her reach.

The habit of this condition of mind had produced in her a peculiar development of the thinking faculties; but the practical use to her of those faculties was almost annulled by the falseness of her views of life, and by her entire inexperience of persons, things, and conduct. Her susceptive nature was opened wide to impressions from without, but as she had never been within reach of teaching or inciting contacts, she was reduced to living on herself alone, was conscious of her own ardors, but was ignorant of her own capacities. Beyond her years in imagining, in meditating, in feeling, in the power of extracting overstrained sensations from almost everything she saw or heard, she was behind them in knowledge of the world, in management, in practical judgment. She was guided almost entirely by emotion, scarcely at all by reason.

Her physical appearance was a reflection of her interior condition. It was vague, unoutlined, aim-

less, and yet suggestive of possibilities of great charm. It bore no mark of forming influences; on the contrary, it gave glaring testimony to the absence of all acquaintance with finished models. She was tall and slight, but not elegant; supple, but not graceful; natural, but not calm. Nature had bestowed upon her capabilities of beauty; circumstances had done nothing to develop them. The very colors of her skin and hair corresponded with her inner dreaminess, and almost typified it. The one was white as snow, as milk, but with fitful glows of hesitating blushes, vague momentary warmths and sudden opalescences, that contradicted all comparison with unliving untransparent milk or snow, and suggested that, beneath the intense whiteness, young eager life was seeking, unguidedly and confusedly, to break through. The other, extraordinarily fine, and silky, and abounding, was of a tint between bleached flax and sunlit sand; it was scarcely credible that it could be hair at all; its glossy, flowing delicacy was amazing, but it was so unreal in tinge that it might have served to enwrap a vision, and scarcely seemed to be an earthly woman's ornament. Her features were fairly regular, but habitually inexpressive; there were, however, moments when they were illumined by sudden flashing rushes of impulse, and while those rushes lasted, the glow of her face was admirable. Her eyes, of pale porcelain-blue, were dreamy and vague, excepting when the sudden fire lighted them. And yet, with all these insufficiencies, indefinitenesses, and unfinishednesses of mind and body, she spread around her an impression of innate powers, of unaroused endowments, of latent faculties that would break

forth lavishly, if occasion came. At certain moments, when the impassioned look was on her, she might have been taken for an Undine waiting to be called to earth, longing, as in the Rhine legend, to shake off from the border of her robe the water that betrayed her origin, claiming to share, rejoicingly, in life, in hope, in love.

In a position such as theirs it was natural that old Countess Rothenfels and her grandchild should have few acquaintances. Their pride could bear neither slights from above, nor familiarities from below. They had, indeed, but one real friend: Herr Müller, a canon of the cathedral, was the only visitor who came often to them. He knew their history; he had watched the formation of the character of Frieda, was deeply interested in her, and had tried, though with small success, to lead her to a practical appreciation of her position and of the combat that was before her.

As she sat at the bedside, in lonely wretchedness, the door-bell rang gently. She roused herself and went to see who was there. The Canon was standing on the landing, in a waterproof, holding a dripping umbrella in his hand.

"Well, my poor child," he said, affectionately, "how is she? Can I come in?"

"Oh yes, come in, Hochwürden," exclaimed Frieda. "It is so kind of you to think of us. She is about the same. She is asleep."

"Ah! if she is asleep I will not disturb her. And perhaps it is better so, for I have something to say to you—something I had rather say when you are in a desponding fit, than when you are away, up in the

sky, in one of your raptures. Can I put my wet coverings where they will do no harm; and can we go into the *Wohnzimmer* for a moment?"

The sitting-room was almost as dreary and as poorly furnished as the bedroom, and its habitual coldness was increased by the look of abandonment it wore. It had not been used since the old lady had fallen ill.

"My dear child," said the white-haired priest, taking Frieda's hand, "I have been thinking a great deal about you. I have expressed to you many times the opinion that the question of your future ought not to be left undealt with until the sad moment comes when you will find yourself alone. It is impossible to shut our eyes to the gravity of the condition of your grandmother, and I feel more and more each day that it is my duty to occupy myself seriously about you. Only, before I do anything, I want to lead you, if possible, to some clear and accepted plan of action. Hitherto we have alluded only in general terms to the anxieties that hang over you; but the time has come, I fear, when I must urge you to speak plainly with a faithful friend like me. You are not, usually, very precise, my child, in your processes of reasoning; we have often battled about them; make an effort to be precise to-day; aid my old affection for you to obtain a definite result, and let us see, together, without further delay, how we are to commence our inquiries. Will you, Frieda?"

"How good and patient you are!" she murmured, in a broken voice. "I will do whatever you may think best."

"Well, now; tell me what it is that you yourself

would wish to do—supposing that it were possible for you to choose."

"I—I do not know. I am very useless. I have read a great deal. I know what is taught in schools. I can talk French, and a little English and Italian. I can play the piano rather well, and you know that I have a voice and have learned how to use it. I can make my clothes and do many sorts of sewing. I can cook—especially pastry. And you have often told me that I have too intense emotions, and—and I think that is all. There never was any reality in me. How can I, incapable as I am, earn wages?"

"I am acquainted with those facts, Frieda," answered the Canon, making an effort to suppress an involuntary smile. "In spite of your incapacity, as you call it, we must find some means of enabling you to 'earn wages;' and for that reason, I want you to tell me, if you can, in what direction you would like me to seek those means. Your nature is rather—how shall I describe it!—well, rather mystic, you know; rather full of aspirations towards the unattainable and the undefinable. I am all the more anxious, therefore, to adopt all the precautions that are within my reach, to avoid shocking your susceptibilities and causing you pain, by proposing to you arrangements that might be repellent to you."

"Really, I do not—quite understand," stammered out Frieda, looking nervously at the Canon.

"My child," he went on, "I will try to explain myself more clearly; but there are ideas I do not like to express; there are hypotheses I do not like to raise. I had rather, much rather, that you should look the future in the face, steadily, deliberately,

and that, out of your own heart, you should make a choice between the various solutions which, so far as we can suppose, may offer themselves for your consideration."

"But, indeed, indeed, I do not comprehend. I am aware of one thing only, that I must obtain a place and be paid by somebody, and my whole being recoils from it."

"Alas, poor child, it has to be done! If you could write poetry, which was your dream when you were little—do you remember, Frieda?—and get money for it, we might dispense with the necessity of a 'place.' But the poetry is not ready, and we are forced to think, together, what kind of place it is to be. Now, in trade there are many openings. . ."

"In trade?" gasped Frieda, coloring to her hair. "In trade? I?—I in a shop? But I am a Rothenfels! And," she went on, with a cry of passionate anguish, "never will I disgrace the name which I alone shall be left to bear."

"Now you have been precise at last, my poor friend. Now you have given me an answer—on one point, at least. You exclude commercial employments from your future. We will allude to them no more—unless we are forced to do so. Then—teaching? What do you say to teaching?"

"How can I teach? I am too ignorant."

"That is not always considered to be a reason for abstaining from teaching," remarked the Canon, taking a pinch of snuff rather vehemently, as if he wished to accentuate the force of the observation. "And really, with your knowledge of music and your grand voice, you might teach singing—most certainly

you might. But we will exclude teaching too—for the present at least. Next, there are the posts occupied by women in the railways and the telegraphs; you could easily pass the examination for them."

"If I did that, I should have to mix with common persons, of low thoughts. I have seen them. Oh no, no! it would be horrible."

"My child," insisted Herr Müller, "necessity is the harshest taskmaster the world knows, for there is no conceivable limit to its depotism. You must resolve to face it in some one of its many shapes. In your sad case (as in most others, indeed) it is only a question of form and degree. It is my office, as your only friend, to urge you to be practical and to face the difficulty before you. You say 'no' to every suggestion that I make. And yet we have to reach a decision. What is it to be?"

"Could I be a companion to somebody?" she asked, frightenedly. "I think I could be agreeable—if I tried; and I would try—indeed I would. My writing is very legible; I have had five prizes at school for literary composition; I delighted in it because it was a form of expansion and expression of myself, and because it satisfied my love of the refinements of form. I think I could write letters, as a sort of secretary. I could read aloud; I have always read aloud to grandmother. When I said, just now, that I can do nothing, I did not mean such things as those."

"We will see—we will see. We will try that channel first, since you prefer it. But if we fail there—and remember that situations as companions are not very abundant—we shall have to fall back, I fear, on one of the other plans."

Frieda hung down her head; tears trickled on her cheeks.

"I must put one more question to you," continued the Canon. "Which would be the less disagreeable to you—to remain in Germany, or to go to some foreign country?"

"Oh, not in Germany, not in Germany! My name is known in Germany. It was once an honored name"—as she spoke, a flash passed through her eyes—"but foreigners might not know it, and might not see the shame on it. I would rather go away and hide myself. But Hochwürden, dear grandmother may live for a long time, yet, though she is so old and so ill; and it may not be essential to decide anything now. I do fear all this with such deep terror. Can we not wait?"

"You may wait, my child; but I must act. God has placed on me a heavy responsibility about you, and I must discharge it. Happily, a channel of action is open to me. I have a friend in France, a great friend; you have heard me speak of him; the Bishop with whom I lived so long in Rome. I am certain he will do his best to help me; I will write to him; we shall see what he says. Meanwhile, my poor Frieda, remember that you are not abandoned by Providence, and that I am here to watch over you, whatever may happen."

"How can I thank you! How can I thank you!"

"And now, before I leave you, let us go gently to your grandmother's side and say a prayer together for her."

Agitated, fevered by this conversation, Frieda prayed with deep excitement; and for a few instants

after the departure of the priest, the emotion stirred up in her by the fervor of her supplications gave her some release from suffering. But the soothing did not last. She went to the window, looked at the rain, and grief returned.

"Sad without, sad within," she muttered. "Grandmother spoke truly. I am to be a slave. It is not the working for bread; I think I do not object to that, for there is something worthy in labor, something noble even, something that may stimulate the imagination and content the idea of duty. No, it is not the work, it is the being obedient to a master that I loathe; it is the odious contact with coarse natures, which will claim the right of mastery over me because I have to hold out my hand for money. I am the last Rothenfels, but I am the first of us to accept domestic wages. Yet I must accept wages, or die of hunger."

She seized her head with her two hands and rocked herself in pain.

"I am awake," said the feeble voice again.

Frieda went quickly to the bedside, leaned over her grandmother, kissed her gently, and whispered, "Herr Müller came, dearest, while you were sleeping, and we said a prayer together at your pillow. I am sure you are much better since."

"Am I, darling?"

Then the old lady murmured, with three intonations of increasing despondency, "Dear child! Good child! Poor child!"

After a short silence she asked, "And what did Herr Müller say?"

"He said that he is going to look out for a situation

for me," answered Frieda, with a trembling of the corners of her mouth.

The old lady shook a little, but she replied, with an effort to be calm, "He is quite right. I expected he would do so. I shall not last much longer. It is better to see about it beforehand."

A moment afterwards she broke down and cried, burstingly, "Oh, Frieda! my child, my Frieda!"

They sobbed in silence, their heads and hands pressed throbbingly together.

Next day the old Countess was distinctly worse. She begged the doctor to tell her how long he expected her to live; and when he left, sent the woman who came in the mornings to help Frieda with the housework, to fetch Herr Müller.

She said to him, "I have explained to Frieda what is to be done. She is to sell this poor furniture; its value will add a trifle to the eighteen hundred marks I have saved up for her; they are in the top drawer. And you—you will not abandon her. There is no one else but you. No, no, you will not abandon her! You will guide her—for she must be guided. She will soon be alone—alone in the weary world! My Frieda, alone!"

"I will not abandon her," said the Canon simply.

A week later the old lady died.

As soon as the funeral was over, Frieda, exhausted and in intense grief, went to lodge with her former schoolmistress. The Canon saw her every day, and endeavored to console and encourage her by wise words. But she was so excited by the scenes she had passed through, the loss of her grandmother had produced in her such an unbearable sensation of heart-

loneliness, that she was eaten up by a violent reaction from the fancies in which she habitually sought asylum, and gave way unresistingly to destroying pain in the present and to crushing terror about the future.

This state continued for many days. While it endured she ceased to dream. She sank under the load of immediate sorrow as completely as if she had never learned to thrust facts aside, and had never found escape from their unpitying presence by absorbing herself in air-built imaginations.

The Canon profited by her breakdown to urge upon her the unreliability of her cherished ideal of a mental existence detached from and irrespective of the actualities of life. She listened to him respectfully, and made no objections to his arguments; but, within herself, she longed to get back to her loved condition of world-forgetting musings as the sole shelter open to her weary spirit.

At last she rallied from her prostration; not gradually, but almost with a sudden leap. She re-entered her kingdom of reverie, and tried, once more, to make of life a distant vapor.

One morning the Canon came in and woke her again to reality by telling her he had received an answer from France.

"Yes, my dear child," he went on, "I have an answer, a most satisfactory answer so far as it goes. Our very first attempt may perhaps lead us to success. I have the hope that your desire to join a lady as companion may, not impossibly, be realized under acceptable conditions. Here is the Bishop's letter; read it—and thank God."

The letter said:—

"A very rich widow, Madame Jean Jelle, who lives principally in Paris, but who has a country house in my diocese, is seeking for a companion. She spoke to me some weeks ago on the matter, indicated vaguely that she wanted a rare person (though she did not explain in what the rarity was to consist), and asked if I could help her.

"When your story came, about Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, Madame Jelle was away; I had to wait to see her, and that has caused delay.

"I have explained to her the painful circumstances in which the young lady finds herself, and I have mentioned the outlines of her history and character which you communicated to me. The result is, that Madame Jelle seems much interested—tempted even—by what I said, desires to know more of your *protegée*, and, to my surprise, makes no difficulty at all about her German nationality.

"I fancy the position would be agreeable—as much so, at least, as such positions can be,—for Madame Jelle assures me that, if she can find the right person, she will treat her as a friend.

"I have told her I will suggest, for your consideration, that the best plan of action will be for Mademoiselle de Rothenfels to write and state her ideas. The address is,—

Madame Jean Jelle,

Château de la Saigne,

near Amboise.

"Let me know what is done, so that I may see what assistance I can give to the completion of the arrangement.

"It may be useful to add that, as Madame Jelle is a woman of decided character and prompt intelligence, it would be advisable to speak very simply and straightforwardly to her."

When Frieda had got through the letter, she laid it down and closed her eyes. Her spirit went to the grave by which she had stood a few days before, and whispered, "Grandmother, I suffer. Come into your child's heart and strengthen her."

"Well," answered Herr Müller, "do you not think that Providence is aiding you?"

"Certainly," she answered, rather wanderingly. "Providence is very good to me."

"And you must be good to yourself as well, and be wise and practical; and you must deal with this carefully, and write, as the Bishop says, a simple, straightforward letter."

"Yes, I must write. I suppose I have to write, and to go away among strangers. Of course I know that I must accept this proposal. But it is indeed hateful to me."

"Frieda, are you absolutely without reason?" exclaimed the Canon, with evident distress. "Here is an opportunity, unhoped for, apparently most advantageous, and you hesitate to pursue it? I do not say to 'accept,' as you do, because, as yet, there is nothing before you to accept; but I do say that you ought to place yourself at once in communication with this Madame Jelle, and do your very best to obtain the appointment."

"If you think so, Hochwürden, I will write at once—though it is sudden, and though it implies so much. But—oh, how I abhor it!"

"Poor Frieda," said the Canon, taking her hand; "is it impossible to put common-sense into you?"

"Common-sense is only one, and one of the least elevated, of our motives of conduct."

"Oh, Frieda, Frieda! why do you force me to speak hardly to you? If you possessed fifty pounds a year you could go on living without common-sense. But, child, you have no bread. If . . ."

"No bread; that is the truth," moaned Frieda, dropping back suddenly to realities. "I must take this place and . . ."

"If you can get it," interrupted the Canon. "Do write directly. As soon as your letter is sent off, I will let the Bishop know, so that he may support your application."

"My application! Yes, that is the name to give to it. I have to make an application—an application!—to a stranger—for wages!"

"Now, my child, my dear child," urged the priest, becoming slightly impatient, "write at once. And remember that you are to employ simple, straightforward language, and not to make what you call a 'literary composition.'"

"I will obey," she answered gravely.

"I will come back this afternoon to see your letter."

Herr Müller went away, and Frieda sat down and thought. After a while, with a movement which, in any one else, would have indicated decision, she pulled her chair to the table, took a pen, and wrote rapidly.

When the Canon returned, she held to him the letter she had prepared, saying, "I think, Hochwürden, this is simple and straightforward." She had written, in French:—

"MADAME,—Circumstances oblige me to earn my bread.

"Hearing that you desire a companion, I write to say that I am ready to assume the duties of that position towards you.

"I believe myself to be capable of discharging them in a manner worthy of myself and of my name.

"I do not disguise from you that it is most painful to me to address this communication to you.

"I await your reply.

"Receive, Madame, the assurance of my best sentiments. COUNTESS FRIEDA V. ROTHENFELS.

"*P. S.*—May I ask you to have the kindness to explain to me what I should have to do?

"*PP. S.*—Will you be so good as to indicate the amount of pay you propose to give me?"

"Hum," said the Canon, drawing his breath. "You propose to send that, do you? It is, as you say, simple and straightforward—very simple and straightforward. But there are degrees in everything, even in the shapes of straightforwardness, and it seems to me that, if you address Madame Jelle in such terms as these, you will receive a refusal to your application."

"But what else can I say? What I have written is the truth."

"I will not discuss with you," replied Herr Müller,

with a sigh. "Give me some paper. I will see what I can suggest myself."

In a few minutes he said, "This is my idea of what you ought to tell her:—

"MADAME,—I venture to write to you in consequence of a letter which the Bishop of your diocese has been so very kind as to address to Canon Müller of Augsburg.

"I understand, from that letter, that Monseigneur has made you acquainted with my name and circumstances, and has informed you that I am seeking a position as companion to a lady. I gather from it also, that, desiring a companion for yourself, you have been good enough to manifest your readiness to receive a communication from me.

"The cost of travelling is so great, and my means are so slender, that it would be difficult for me to present myself personally before you as a candidate. Otherwise I should have proposed to come to you in order that you might judge of my fitness for the post I desire. As, for this reason, I am obliged to limit myself to correspondence, I should be very grateful if you would mention the points on which you may wish me to speak to you in detail about myself. I will hasten to answer your questions frankly.

"In my loneliness I am unable to offer you any other recommendation than that of Canon Müller, who has known me from childhood.

"I trust you will allow me to ask you to acquaint me with the nature of the duties I should have to discharge, and to indicate to me the amount of remuneration of which you may think me worthy.

"I beg you, Madame, to receive the assurance of all my sentiments of high consideration.

"FRIEDA DE ROTHENFELS."

When Herr Müller had finished reading, he added, "You observe that I have altered everything, even to the signature: in France girls do not bear titles. What do you say to my wording?"

Frieda hesitated. She disliked the courteous phrases the Canon had employed. Her instincts led her to prefer the "simple and straightforward" language of her own composition. But she owed such respect and gratitude to Herr Müller, she felt she was so bound to follow his advice, that, after a struggle with herself, she answered, "Of course you are right. You always are. You are indeed a friend to me."

"Then get the letter written, and I will put it in the post," said the Canon, thinking it prudent to leave Frieda no time for dreaming.

A few days afterwards a reply arrived from Madame Jelle. Its words were:—

"MADEMOISELLE,—I thank you for your letter.

"So far as I can form an opinion from it and from what I have heard of you from the Bishop, I incline to think that we might get on very well together. But it is impossible to decide a matter of such gravity for both of us without meeting face to face and talking.

"Consequently, I hope you will not refuse to carry out your excellent idea of coming to see me, and that you will permit me to place at your disposal the enclosed sum for the expenses of your journey. I

trust you will do me the favor of staying with me for a few days.

"In order to spare you the fatigue of going on to Amboise, I will receive you at my house in Paris, 90 Cours la Reine.

"Will you acquaint me with the day and hour of your arrival, so that I may send to meet you at the station? You will recognize my carriage by the gray liveries and brown horses.

"Believe, Mademoiselle, in my sincere sentiments of sympathy and regard.

"ROSALIE JELLE."

A note for five hundred francs was in the envelope.

As soon as Freida recognized that it was a bank-note, she threw it on the ground and almost stamped upon it with disgust.

"Money!" she cried out. "She sends me money! She dares to send me money! And this is the beginning of my acquaintance with the woman whose 'companion' I am to be! What companionship can I have with a creature who insults me before she knows me? I will not go."

It occurred to her, however, that she was bound to tell Herr Müller what had happened. So she went to him, carrying the letter and its enclosure in her outstretched hand, and fancying they burned her.

"See, Hochwürden!" she exclaimed, in bitterness and shame; "see what this Madame Jelle has presumed to do! She has had the cruelty, the insolence, to offer me money! Money to *me*—to *me*! I will send it back to her."

"Let me read her letter," said the Canon, calmly.

"Really," he observed, after looking through it, "you have a strangely restive mind; you take offence where kindness alone is meant. It would be evident to any one but yourself that this good lady is animated by the most considerate, and even the most generous, feelings towards you. She proposes to come up to Paris expressly to meet you; she asks you, in very pleasant terms, to stay with her. You told her in your letter that you had no money for travelling; and, in reply, she sends you more than what is needful for the journey both ways, with delicate words of sympathy. Yet, my child, instead of recognizing all this, instead of feeling deeply grateful to Providence and Madame Jelle for the singularly rare kindness of which you are the object, you burst into indignation and talk of insult! Frieda, Frieda, this will not do. Your dear grandmother would be deeply pained if she knew that you behaved in this way. Did you expect that Madame Jelle would come herself to Augsburg to look at you?"

Frieda stood still, in deep reflection. She lifted her hands a little and dropped them again. Twice she made an attempt to speak. It was not till two minutes had passed that she said with an effort, "I see that I am wrong. But yet, though I am wrong, instinct makes me hate to go to strangers, and holds me back."

"That may be, my poor child. But your talk of holding back is out of place in conditions such as yours. Those conditions are so dominating that you must bow your humbled head before them and make the best of them. In this case of Madame Jelle it seems to me that you are extraordinarily fortunate.

Your duty is to write to her at once, to thank her warmly, and to fix the day on which you will be with her."

Frieda looked at him. She answered sadly, "I will write to her. I will thank her. I will go—next week."

CHAPTER II.

JEAN and Jacques Jelle were twin sons of Charles Jelle, blacksmith at Drouenne, a hamlet three miles from Angers. They learned to read and write at the village school, and then came to work in their father's forge. Between them they invented a machine for making screws, and from that beginning the two rose to fortune. They labored with the unceasing application, the self-denying thrift, of the French peasant, and when Jean died, the firm of Jelle Twins had become the great screw-manufacturers of the world, and the two brothers had laid by large fortunes. Both had married; Jacques had been left a widower, with a boy; Jean's wife survived him, but had no children.

The parents of Madame Jean Jelle sold drapery and cotton-stuffs in a small shop at Nantes. In addition to the profits of their trade, they possessed a little income of their own: for persons in their position they were, therefore, fairly well off; they kept a maid-of-all-work, had chairs at their parish church, and the wife wore a black silk dress on Sundays. Their daughter, Rosalie, grew up in the back parlor of the shop, and was taught to recite the list of the Departments of France and of their principal towns and rivers; beyond that her instruction did not extend. One day Jean Jelle came to Nantes, entered the shop to

buy some buttons, saw Rosalie, told himself she would make him a useful clerk, and married her. Then commenced for her a life of wearing drudgery; her husband ordered her to keep the books and write the correspondence of the firm; she worked fifteen hours a day and did as much as either of the twins to obtain success. As money came she began to wish for rest, at first, and then for a little pleasure; but Jean Jelle gave her neither; he forced her to toil on. She grew to loathe her life; but habit rendered her obedient. She had no affection for her husband; the ledger and the letter-book formed the one tie between them; and when, suddenly, Jean Jelle died, her only sentiment was deep relief. She found, with much surprise, that, to recognize her faithful aid in business, he had left her all he owned, and that, with liberty, an income of five hundred thousand francs a year had fallen to her.

In intense need of repose, freedom, and amusement, she came at once to Paris; but as she knew no one, and was prevented by her mourning from buying smart clothes or going to the theatres, she passed the first four months of her widowhood lying on her back—reading novels. By degrees she found she wanted something more. People came around her, advised her, and got money out of her pocket into theirs; but her mind was too commercial, too matter of fact, to allow her to remain a prey to others. Besides, aspirations rose within her; intelligence and will, of both of which she possessed a far larger share than she had, so far, been aware, sprang up to guide her; she travelled, opened her eyes to life and thought, read immensely (not novels), and as she had an admirable

memory, a strong natural faculty of analysis, and an unusually large share of the adaptability and imitativeness which are such special properties of French women, she created for herself an education, fitted herself to her new conditions, and became a woman of the world. After several years of wandering and studying (during which she refused thirty-four offers of marriage from gentlemen of various nationalities who were desirous of living on her money—she preserved the list of them), she bought a house in Paris, settled down, opened her drawing-rooms, and found that society desired to be admitted to her parties.

The training of her ideas had already progressed far, but it moved on still more rapidly and widely after her establishment in Paris. She found herself in contact there with such a variety of stimulants that the development of her faculties extended in many directions at once; while, under the influence of the exciting atmosphere she was breathing, her passion for enjoyment, and especially for enjoyment in the form of sensations, became insatiable. Reaction from the meannesses, the wretchednesses, and the overwork of her married life, led her to seek eagerly for satisfactions of whose existence, even, she had, in former years, no suspicion. She continued to be intensely practical; her common-sense, her business habits, remained unweakened; but notwithstanding these steadying holds upon her, she was carried away, more and more, by the yearning for gratifications of her tastes, and, above all, for constantly renewed emotions.

She had worked up to this condition through four successive stages of evolution. First had come, with

the sudden possession of money, the mere animal hunger for idleness, for independence, for contentment of the caprices and the longings, for purchasable pleasures in all their shapes. That condition merged quickly into thirstings, vague at first, then clear and irresistible, for delicacies and graces, for elegance of person and surroundings, for physical refinements, for soothings to her eye and flatterings to her vanity. The third phase—the need of intellectual satisfactions—was slow in coming; it was not, indeed, until she had labored long at her own unfolding, that she began to recognize the value of those satisfactions; but when, at last, she learned to know them, her passion for them became intense. Like neophytes, she exaggerated. She threw herself into the society of thinkers, talkers, writers, artists; she tried to live for ideas and for the finished expression of ideas. Her appetite augmented with the food she gave it; the more she felt, the more she longed to feel. She found life delightful, and yet was convinced that it could be rendered more delightful still. She overflowed with enthusiasms; yet no enthusiasms quite contented her; she always called for more. Then opened out before her the fourth phase. It seemed to her that she could obtain still further and higher joys if she could ally ideality to her intense reality; that as pleasure becomes less or greater according to the quantity of sensation that accompanies it, her capacity of enjoyment would augment with the increase of her powers of sensation, and that she could supply what was absent from her, and thereby augment those powers, if she could bring to her side, in intimate daily contact, an impelling, idealizing

influence. As the want grew with time, the notion germinated in her that there must be, about the world, some woman who lived for the ideal, just as she herself lived for the real; some woman whose inspiring presence might put new pulsations into her, lead her to fresh capacities of sentiment, and carry to her, by inoculation, the faculty of creative feeling. She had heard and talked a good deal about "will power," "infusion," "impregnation," not only in their medical applications (which scarcely interested her), but particularly in their use and action in ordinary life, in their exercise—whether conscious or unconscious—between persons who live habitually together, in the unceasing modulations of character and sensation which result from the contact of each day, especially where highly strung natures are operating, or being operated on. The subject of will-infusion interested her keenly; she had watched attentively the ordinary experiments on it, had become convinced of the reality and the efficacy of its force, and was inclined to try it on herself, with the object of absorbing from another, capacities which were wanting in her own organization.

She was in this condition of inquiring speculation when the Bishop spoke to her of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. The description of the peculiar temperament and dispositions of that young lady appeared to her to coincide so closely with what she thought she wanted, that she determined to examine her carefully. With that object she invited her to come to Paris.

In Frieda's dreams it had seemed to her that, though she had never beheld any of the graces of existence,

she knew them all by instinct. Amid the wretched ugliness of her life at Augsburg (where not one passing elegance, except a flower sometimes, was ever within her reach, or even in her sight from far), her imagination, assisted by book-descriptions, had pictured to her the brightness that could, as she supposed them, be supplied by well-directed money. It was one of her fantastic joys to conceive herself enthroned in material splendors, and to feel that vision lifted her from poverty and privation to knowledge of all the charms and all the radiances that, according to her guesses, surrounded others more fortunate than herself. She believed, indeed, that omniscient fancy had shown her all the shapes which beauty can assume, in things or persons, and that reality could teach her nothing more.

But when, on the morning of her arrival in Paris—her body wearied, and her heart full of indignation against fate, of shame for herself, and of anticipatory aversion for Madame Jelle—she drove under the archway of the house in the Cours la Reine; when she entered the great hall; when her eyes beheld, for the first time, what it is that money, invention, and taste really signify in the arrangement of a house,—a shock of mixed surprise and pain passed through her. She perceived at her first glance that the imagination on which she had so confidently relied to open out all the vistas to her had not guided her correctly. She saw in one second that her trusted pilot had misled her; and the pain of the deception diminished the pleasure which the inspiring show aroused in her.

With a nervous awe which humbled her, but

which she was powerless to repress, she glanced at the mixture of marbles, metals, tapestries, dark woods, hangings, and variegated large-leaved plants which filled the hall, and scarcely understood the servant who informed her, in a discreet voice, that "Madame awaits Mademoiselle in the drawing-room."

Mechanically she went up broad low steps, silent with thick carpets; amid banks of flowers; between the folds of heavy *portières;* wide doors opened before her; confusedly, as if she were not herself, she heard her name announced, "Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

As she entered the room a tumult of varying lights, of colors, stuffs, and changing sheens, of glistening mirrors, of depths of shade, of palm branches, of pictures on the walls, of gold, of statues,—a sudden startled awareness of a new revelation of beautiful possibilities,—seized her brain. The sight shook her; it made her almost giddy; she had to make an effort to remain calm.

Before her, amid all these brilliancies, stood Madame Jelle, a large woman with a red face, holding out her hand.

A soft voice, which—even in that moment of strange emotion—seemed to Frieda to be in utter contradiction to the red face, said, "I am so glad you have arrived. I have been thinking of you all night in the horrible train. I fear you must be extremely tired after so long a journey."

The large, red-faced woman looked at her with interest and curiosity.

Frieda answered awkwardly, "Thank you; thank you very much. Only rather tired."

"It is very good of you to have come so far to see me," said the soft voice again. "Now that you have reached me I must take care of you, and must tell you that the first thing you ought to do is to go up at once to your room and rest for a while."

The kindness of this reception touched Frieda; her disposition to be defiant, hostile even, diminished instantly; some sympathy came into her, involuntarily, for the big person who spoke to her so gently, with such a wonderfully sweet voice, and who lived in such an admirable house. It was almost with a flutter of suddenly rising confidence that she replied—"I will do whatever you like, madame. I will go up if you wish it."

"I am sure it will be better for you; you look so exhausted. Let me show you the way."

She led Frieda up-stairs. A maid was waiting, and opened a door for them.

"This is your room," said Madame Jelle. "Virginie will serve you."

As she spoke, she caught sight of a box, covered with torn cow-hide and bound with bands of rusty tin, held down by massive rivets, that stood against the wall. She gazed at the object with amazement, and exclaimed, "Is that—your luggage?"

Frieda understood. Disdain for her box was an insult to herself. The flash dashed into her eyes; her lips tightened bitterly; she answered indignantly, "Yes, madame, that is my luggage. If you. . ."

She checked herself. Bitter as the provocation appeared to her, she recognized that, under all the circumstances, it would be both discourteous and ungrateful to make an angry answer.

Madame Jelle saw the movement, and opened her eyes with some astonishment. She felt, however, that she was rather in the wrong herself, and that she ought not to have alluded to the box. So she said, very gently, taking no notice of Frieda's excited manner—"Virginie, Mademoiselle de Rothenfels will lie down and rest. You will bring her some tea."

Turning to Frieda she added, with a kind smile, "Mademoiselle, I breakfast at twelve. If you are well enough to join me, I shall be delighted. If you feel too tired, you will be served in your room. Adieu for the moment. Try to sleep."

As she descended the stairs she thought to herself, much interested and half amused, "Exactly what I expected; most exactly. The Canon's description is marvellously correct. As he says, she is mad with pride, and her temper is all fire. Only, there are faculties in her that he knows nothing about, for the good reason that no eye but that of a French woman could detect them. She is full of feminine possibilities—I can see that at a glance; she is capable of being lifted, when her German crust is rubbed away from her, into a type of extraordinary distinction. How diverting it would be to develop her into a real woman! For all the rest, I must see. How she did effervesce about her box!"

Frieda sat down in an arm-chair and closed her eyes. Her momentary anger cleared away. She had a consciousness that it had been misplaced, and felt a little ashamed of it. A soothing came upon her. She could not refuse to recognize that she had been received with marked friendliness. Both Madame Jelle and the whole situation were other than

she had expected. Excepting for the trunk, she had not been called on, so far, to defend herself against anything. And the house! She felt vaguely that she had fallen into a magic world; that perceptions of a charmed existence, as bright in reality as all she had imagined in dream, had opened out before her; that she had learned in an instant the true nature of luxury. But fatigue and excitement rendered her unable to distinguish her sensations. There was a swimming in her brain of unlooked-for welcome, of suddenly unveiled brightnesses, of ideals realized in unanticipated forms. All was tempting, but nothing was precise.

When the tea was brought to her she looked at the objects on the tray, but she was incapable of perceiving them distinctly; she saw only that they shone. She murmured more than once, "How incorrectly I had figured to myself all this!"

After a while she fell asleep for half an hour. When she awoke her head was somewhat clearer.

She sat up and looked round the room. To any one acquainted with the usages and ways of Paris women it would have been simply a pretty bedroom, very feminine in the deatils of conception and execution; to her it was a revealment. She stood, turned slowly, gazed more and more steadily, and after a prolonged survey, stopped before the toilet-table. In the high glass, amid a background of white muslin, lace, and blue streaming ribbons, she saw her pale worn face, and wondered if, in truth, it was herself.

She recognized, more and more clearly, that she was learning a lesson; that she had not pictured

things as they are; that, in her figuring of material satisfactions, her unguided fancy had turned too much to marble halls, to alabaster columns, to golden gateways, to thrones and real robes, and not enough to softness, delicacy, and elegance; too much to grandeur, not enough to grace. She was unaware that she had made the natural mistake of all the ignorant.

She perceived, with her rapid impressionability, that the few teaching minutes she had passed through had given her, already, an insight into other conditions of existence. If she stayed there, those conditions would become her own, and one fragment of her visions would turn into reality. But if she did not stay? Could she go back contentedly to Augsburg after seeing this? Would dreaming continue to suffice—after this? Madame Jelle might refuse to keep her. What then? In that case, would it have been better to have remained uninstructed? She had found at last what she felt that she was made for; was she to lose it?

She shivered slightly, and shook her head doubtingly; the anchor that had always held her seemed suddenly to be insecure. Scarcely consciously, she unlocked her box and commenced to unpack. She lifted a few objects from the top, and then stopped. Another new sensation had come into her; it was that her independence had diminished. In proof of it she saw, with irritation and almost with shame, that the poor garments she was handling were no longer one with her. They had meant her life until then, her life of penury and suffering; suddenly there was unfitness in them; they had ceased to be ennobled

by her mere possession of them. She knew, by some mysterious suggestion, that what was hers could no longer be in harmony with her unless it possessed beauty, the sort of beauty that had just been disclosed to her.

She rose and fixed her eyes upon the trunk—the trunk that Madame Jelle had so evidently despised. While she looked she told herself that ugliness is relative, that it exists only as a consequence of contrast, and that there can be no contrast without experience. If that trunk were ugly—that faithful trunk which other Rothenfels had used—it could only be by comparison with more attractive trunks. What was she herself, then, by comparison with other women? What appeared to be true of the trunk, might be equally true of her own person as well.

The hour she had spent alone had opened her eyes to many thoughts; had indeed begun to modify her whole conception of the relationship between herself and outside things.

There was a soft tap at the door. The maid came in. She showed astonishment at finding Frieda in the act of emptying her box, and exclaimed, "But—mademoiselle should have left that for me to do. I was only waiting till mademoiselle awoke to put her things away. What dress will mademoiselle wear for breakfast?"

She knelt beside the box and set to work to pull out its scanty contents.

"What dress?" echoed Frieda. "Why — this dress." She pointed to the one she had on.

Then it occurred to her that the maid expected her to change the clothes in which she had travelled.

She possessed but one black gown. She had made it for herself after her grandmother's death. It had not seemed to her before, that a single dress could be insufficient; it was enough at Augsburg; yet somehow, abruptly, she recognized that it was not enough in Paris, and felt, again, humiliated. Pride helped her, however; it was with an appearance of calm that she went on, "I am accustomed to do everything for myself. Thanks for your offered aid; but, really, I have no need of it. Pray do not wait."

The maid got up, seemed much surprised, but went away in silence.

Frieda looked at the closing door and murmured, "There is tyranny in this. And yet, it is not a painful tyranny. What is it that is happening to me? Is my nature changing?"

She proceeded to arrange herself. According to the theories she had applied at Augsburg, she made her person as attractive as her poor means permitted. But she could not drive out the instinctive consciousness that her appearance was not in unison with her new surroundings. When she had done her best, she said to herself, with a nervous apprehension that was new to her, "Now for Madame Jelle."

She went down-stairs, entered the drawing-room, made two steps forward, stopped, and looked. As she perceived there were other rooms right and left, she advanced slowly, turning her eyes everywhere to seek for her hostess. She was not there. Finding herself alone, she stood still, beneath drooping curtains that hid an archway, and gazed intently.

The spectacle appeared to her to be even more won-

derful than when she had first seen it, at the moment of her arrival. Then, in agitation, unable to perceive details, she had but glanced around her and had received only a deep general impression. Now, refreshed, alone and eager, prepared and stimulated by her thinkings up-stairs, seeing in all these strange sights a personal application to herself, and a new influence on her imagination and character, her eyes flew from object to object, from shape to shape, from color to color, seeking to discover the methods of grouping, the secrets of light and shade, the handlings of contrasts, by which so admirable a whole had been produced, and rejoicing in the pageant of such a gathering of delighting elegances. She strained her eyes at the scene before her and applied herself to fix it in her memory.

After long silent gazing, excitement grew within her; her imagination became, as usual, fevered; she joined her hands and cried, aloud, "It is, indeed, a privilege to behold such a sight as this!"

As the words burst from her, steps came up behind her, and a soft voice answered, "I do not know whether to be most pleased at finding you so much better, or at the appreciation you are showing of my nest."

Sharply, blushingly, Frieda turned; she saw Madame Jelle at her side, and exclaimed, "Oh, madame, I believed I was alone, and spoke only to myself! But it is so beautiful! It does teach me so much! It opens such new conceptions to me! Is all this your own outcome? Is it all—*you*?"

Madame Jelle laughed and answered, "Well, so far as it is possible to call my own a work of which

no part has been executed by my own hands, this is my own. It is the product of my thought. In that sense it is, to use your word, *me*."

"I envy you for having created it, madame," said Frieda, gravely. After looking for an instant at Madame Jelle, she added, "Your nature must be a harmony."

"No," she protested; "not a harmony, I assure you. My nature is a discord, rather than a harmony; for it is made up of contradictions. But I comprehend your meaning, because I know your tendencies. Your friend Canon Müller has written a long letter, a very detailed letter, to the Bishop, trying to explain you to us. No, I am not a harmony."

Frieda felt suddenly chilled. She had forgotten, in her new delight, that she was there as a candidate to be judged. The painful memory of it dashed back into her, and with it came a wounding irritation that Canon Müller should have thought it necessary to "explain" her before she arrived. Her defiant instincts sprang once more forward. Happily, before she had time to speak, the butler appeared solemnly from behind the curtains and announced that breakfast was ready.

"I breakfast usually alone," said Madame Jelle, as they sat down. "I have a good deal of business to get through, and have adopted the rule of seeing nobody before three o'clock. At dinner, on the contrary, I like society. Of course I shall have no guests while you are with me, because your mourning is so recent and so real. I hope, however, that you will not mind my nephew, Jules Jelle. As I have no children, he has become almost a son to me,

and comes whenever he is free; I expect him to-night."

Frieda bowed, made no reply, and looked at the table. Its aspect was as strange to her, and impressed her as much, as all the other arrangements of the house. Madame Jelle talked little; she glanced from time to time at Frieda, and seemed to be examining her.

When they got back to the drawing-room, and the coffee had been brought in, Madame Jelle said, "Do you feel strong enough to talk a little? or would you prefer to wait until to-morrow before we try to make acquaintance with each other?"

A sensation of pain ran through Frieda as she heard these words. She lifted her eyes and answered, rather rigidly, "I am entirely at your disposal, madame; now, or to-morrow."

"Then let us commence at once. It is one of my principles never to delay without good reason."

Frieda braced herself to listen.

Madame Jelle pushed a cushion behind her back, leaned upon it twice to assure herself that it was in the right place, settled herself comfortably, and began. "I am afraid I must make a long speech to you; though I shall say as little as possible on this occasion. I think I had better begin by telling you that you are not altogether a stranger to me. That letter from Canon Müller has given me an insight into your character. Your sad history (which the Bishop repeated to me) had touched me deeply, and the letter has added to the interest which the story had aroused in me. It seems to me that you must be unlike any one I have known, that you are moved by dispositions and

guided by aspirations special to yourself. No woman but a German could possess such a temperament as yours; and I may tell you at once, in general terms, that your temperament attracts me. Furthermore, your name and birth entitle you to a consideration and a respect which I should scarcely be tempted to show to any applicant differently placed. For these reasons I incline to the first impression—subject, of course, to the results of discussion with you—that some of the peculiarities which, according to the description sent us by the Canon, you appear to present, may serve to bring us together, and to create ties between us. It is certainly to differences not to resemblances, that I look for grounds of sympathy. We have but one single similarity, so far as I can see; we both love the beautiful. In all else we are utterly unlike. You are, I know, a dreamer. I am, above all, practical. Yet, in our very diversity, I look for the causes of mutual satisfactions. It would allure me to study such a nature as yours, and to extract new impressions from it. I speak to you with this simplicity and this frankness because you are yourself; not only because your spirit is what it is, but because you bear an historic name; because I cannot use to you the language I should employ to everyday people; because I wish that, from our first talk, you should perceive that you are not, in my eyes, a mere candidate companion, but a possible future earnest friend; because I desire that, whatever be the issue of our meeting—whether you stay with me or return to Augsburg—you should retain the conviction that I receive you with the feelings of regard that are your due; and because I know that, with your unworldly and inde-

pendent nature I can address you safely in such words as these."

Tears rose to Frieda's eyes. She leaned forward, took Madame Jelle's hand for an instant, and said, "Thank you; thank you. I thank you deeply."

"No answer that you could make, mademoiselle, could prove to me more conclusively how right I am to speak to you in this strain. But let me go on. Thus far I have talked of you. I must say something of myself as well; I must describe to you certain parts of me with which it is essential that you should be acquainted, so as to form an opinion of me, as I am trying to form one of you. Let me assure you that, though I am terribly selfish, I am very capable of affection, and that if, after sufficient examination, we feel that each of us could have liking for the other, I am sure you would find in me a thorough friend. Next, let me tell you that my husband gained a great fortune in trade, and left it to me. He and his brother Jacques were the firm of Jelle Twins. You, perhaps, have never heard of them; they were great screw-makers. When I became a widow—you must not be surprised at my telling you all these details; I have a frank character, and I like facts to be known at once,—when I became a widow, I found before me opportunities that were new to me. Like you, I had aspirations; but I wanted to satisfy mine; while, if the Canon is correct in the portrait he has painted, you have always been content to use yours as mere comforting thoughts. I have worked out some part of my aspirations by installing myself in this house. I have gratified another part by surrounding my person with very

finished delicacies. I have contented a third part by forming around me a society which amuses and even interests me. I have ceased to be a commercial woman, and have grown into a woman of the world, courted and flattered because I am not disagreeable, and, more still, because mankind grovels before money. I have still a fourth aspiration to satisfy; I have to discover a friend to live with me, and to—to complete me."

She stopped and looked interrogatively at Frieda, who, staring at the carpet, remained silent.

"What that friend should be, according to my view of her, I will explain to you by degrees. Tell me—in what I have said thus far, is there anything which seems to you inacceptable?"

"In all that you have said thus far, madame," answered Frieda, lifting up her eyes earnestly towards Madame Jelle, "everything is acceptable to me; nay, more, everything interests me deeply."

"Then I will go on a little longer, though I do not wish to say too much to-day; we have time before us; the question we are examining is too grave to be dealt with precipitately. But there is one point to which I must allude at once, though it is very delicate—perhaps, indeed, because it is so delicate. The friend that I am looking for must lead my life. The main object of my life is to satisfy my tastes. For that purpose, the first rule I apply is to require elegance around me in every shape it can assume. I have passed so many years without it that my craving for it now is altogether limitless; the contentment of my eyes has become a passion in me; I cannot endure the spectacle of ugliness in any shape whatever. You,

mademoiselle, possess internal grace—the grace of sentiment I mean—in a highly developed degree; but—here comes the delicate point—you have not yet acquired external grace, and I tell you frankly that the possession of it is indispensable in the person I am seeking."

Frieda suppressed a movement of irritation, and said, almost calmly, "I have always admired external grace; but I have admired vaguely, for, until to-day, I did not know its aspects. From to-day I shall attach to it its true value."

"Then, would you—could you," continued Madame Jelle, hesitatingly, "consent to be guided by me in matters concerning—concerning your personal appearance—and dress—and ways—and manners? In short, would you—would you be willing to fit yourself to the life of Paris—as I lead it?"

Frieda colored. It angered her to be told that her defects of person were so evident that it was necessary to make them the subject of objection in her very first conversation. But she answered, "I should be willing. I would consent. I frankly avow, indeed, that I desire to possess the personal attractions which, thus far, I have had no opportunity of acquiring."

"Yes, yes; I quite believe you. With your nature it could not be otherwise—in principle. But let me say to you at once that, though I trust entirely in your good will, I have doubts, grave doubts, as to your capacity."

Frieda threw her head up, and was on the point of crying out an indignant protestation. Madame Jelle lifted her hand to stop her, and went on, with a bright smile—"No, do not be angry again, as you

were this morning about your box. Hear me first. When I say that I doubt your capacity, I do not mean your individual enablement to struggle towards an ideal of feminine perfection; but I do mean that the French ideal and the German ideal of that perfection are so absolutely different, that you might shrink from accepting my standard. I refer to this at once, because I attach high importance to it. I do not propose, however, that we should come to a decision now. Think about it; try to measure yourself with respect to it. We will return to the subject at another time."

"But—really," replied Frieda, with a puzzled air—"really I do not understand your meaning. What is it that—that you would desire of me?"

"I should desire of you something that, in my eyes, is very simple, but which, in your eyes, may be very difficult. I should desire that in dress, in movements, in manner, and in tone, you should become as much as possible Parisian, and cease as much as possible to be German."

"Cease to be German?" echoed Frieda excitedly, almost springing to her feet. "Why, madame, it is my glory to be German! It is the sole nobleness that is left to me! It is my one inheritance! All else is lost to me. The honor of my race and name is German! Cease to be German, madame? I would rather die of want."

"It is wonderfully interesting to hear you talk in that wild way," answered Madame Jelle, fixing her eyes on Frieda with involuntary admiration; "but still, you must permit me to say that you exaggerate. I am not alluding to your 'inner me'—to use the won-

derful German phrase that Herr Müller employs about you—but solely to your handling of your person. Let me speak out distinctly," she went on more seriously, "and do not think me rough. If you are to stop here the view of you must be pleasing to me, and it cannot be pleasing to me unless it partakes of the elegance in which I frame myself. Will you consent to be made elegant? That is the question. It seems to me—and I am now rather an experienced judge—that nature has bestowed upon you a physical personality which is susceptible of striking elevation. I have been examining you attentively, and I am certain I could make of you a type apart—a type unknown to the crowd, combining qualities that lie usually wide asunder. It would be an immense amusement and an earnest pleasure to me to do so. But"—and as she spoke, her eye ran over the untidy shabbiness of Frieda's dress—"you really need a good deal of altering; in every detail, I may say. Think it over, as I said just now. Make acquaintance with me. See by observation—and, I hope, by appreciation too—what it is I mean. See if you can decide to adopt my views and habits; I believe them to be those of a thorough woman of our time. See if, remaining German in your heart (I ask for no change there), you can become somewhat Parisian in appearance and in ways, but so far only as Parisianism can be fitted to your very peculiar individuality, which must be carefully preserved as a treasure. I am convinced, speaking as an artist in women, that there is a great feminine result in you, if only you will let me bring it out. That letter from Canon Müller has told

me more about you than I could have discovered in weeks of talking. I am able, with its assistance, and that of my own eyes, to lay the first outline of a programme at once before you."

Frieda sat still, dazed by this explanation. She made no attempt to speak. She did not even try to think. A fog was before her; but she heard obscurely in her spirit a wandering echo of Madame Jelle's ideas, and notwithstanding the vexation aroused in her by the open discussion of her physical insufficiencies, and by the frank declaration that change in her was to be the recognized condition of her admission to the post of companion, a voice whispered to her that she herself desired the very transformation that was proposed to her. As the moments passed she felt even tempted by the opportunity, which seemed to open suddenly before her, of realizing, for the first time, one portion of her hitherto unproductive dreams.

Madame Jelle left her, however, no time to seek for clear impressions. She said gayly, "Well, that is enough for this morning. Come with me, and let me show you the house and what is in it. It will interest you. Afterwards I will take you for a drive, so that you may get a first glimpse of Paris in the sunlight. When you have made a beginning of acquaintance with the aspect of the place, and especially of the women, it will be more easy for you to arrive at an opinion on what I have been saying."

It was not until Frieda went to her room before dinner, after seeing the Boulevards and the Bois, that she had a moment to herself, and by that time her head had grown so full of whirling objects, and her

fatigue had become so great, that she was incapable of any thought at all. She dropped upon a chair, closed her eyes, and heard, amid the confusion of the memories of the day, an uprising call within her heart—"Grandmother, dear grandmother, help your lonely child!"

CHAPTER III.

JULES JELLE, Madame Jelle's nephew, came to dinner. He was little like the ordinary prudent Frenchman of this generation. Hot-headed, excitable, impetuous, always at the mercy of the influence of the moment, whatever it might be; full of wayward sensitivenesses unballasted and uncontrollable. On one point he might have been described as mad; of a madness of which some examples have grown up in France since 1870—his patriotism was a fury. He groaned and writhed at the decline of his country; hated Germany with all the turbulence of his nature, and shrieked against her very name; reviled Italy and England; proclaimed that Russia was, with France, the only noble land in Europe; longed for war; cried vengeance against the world for being indifferent to the fall of France, and scorned the Government of the Republic because it professed to desire peace. He travelled much, read capriciously, knew a great deal, declared that he despised mankind, and grew each year more fitful and erratic. He cared little for his father, had deep affection for his aunt, and though in his excitements he made and abandoned many friends, felt no real attachment for anybody else.

When Frieda came down she found him in the drawing-room. All that she could see of him, in her

weariness and emotion, was that he was tall, had a brown beard, and seemed to be about seven or eight and thirty.

He bowed coldly, ceremoniously, saying, "As my aunt has not appeared yet, will you permit me to introduce myself to you? I am Jules Jelle. You, I know, are Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

Frieda answered shyly, "Yes—I was aware—that is to say, Madame Jelle told me—that you would dine here."

Uncomfortable silence followed. Frieda was conscious that Jules Jelle was examining her, and suspected that he disliked her.

There was a great rustling; and, in a trailing deep-red dress, Madame Jelle swept in. The glance she cast on Frieda's black woollen gown seemed to be accompanied by a shiver of pain.

Frieda wondered to herself, "Am I really so frightful?"

The dinner was not lively. There was little talk; but there was much furtive scanning of Frieda, who felt, more and more, that she was out of touch with her surroundings.

Soon after they left the dining-room, she pleaded great fatigue as an excuse for disappearing, and went to bed.

As Jules Jelle closed the door behind her, he burst out, "She is odious! Absolutely odious!"

His aunt looked at him with a slight smile, but made no answer.

"So this is the Valkyrie," he went on, "that your perpetual seeking for new diversions has fetched from beyond the Rhine—this odious Prussian!"

He flung himself into a chair, and almost shrieked out, "*Aïe!* her Teutonic boots! In the name of all the outraged delicacies, did you see her boots? How can you, my aunt, you of all women, conceive that such a creature can be endurable to yourself or to anybody else? She has set me shivering. I have lived to behold that appalling spectacle in your superfine palace! The wearer of those boots is what you have brought up here from Augsburg, as the possible companion of your days!"

"Pray go on, Jules," observed his aunt, mockingly. "You are really most interesting and instructive."

"I know the type," he continued, more and more angrily; "it is described, with admiring fondness, in every novel in the German language. A mixture of the legends of the dark ages, of the insanest idyls of to-day, and of the uninvented philosophies of the future! A compound of Velleda, Lorelei, Sappho, and a mad lamb! Truly, an agreeable subject of contemplation for me each time I dine with you! Have you lost your reason, aunt? I have implored you not to commit the needless folly of bringing such an applicant to Paris. Now that you have got her here, and have obtained this crushing proof of her barbarous unfitness, I do trust you will put her back into the train to-morrow."

"Now that I have got her here, I think I shall keep her here," answered Madame Jelle in the softest tone of her soft voice.

"Keep her? You think you will keep her?"

"Yes, if she will stop."

"Keep her? Well, if you do, I shall beg you to lock her up on a certain number of days each week,

so that I may not see her when I come. I hate her."

"Yes, Jules, it is your way to hate hastily and easily. As for myself, I am distinctly pleased with her. I know the objections to her."

"Do you? The objections are, that every single argument is against her, and that there is not one for her."

"Pardon me; there is one argument in her favor—my own will, and, with me, that counts for something. I repeat that I know the objections to her; I have taken them carefully into account; but I expect they will fade away before a reason I have for believing that she will suit me better than anybody else."

"There must be a hundred thousand candidates in France, and you have not looked at one of them."

"Because, for motives of my own, it seems to me that this one is, in all probability, superior to them all, precisely because she is not French. Wait till I have dressed her; wait till I have given a beginning of education to the latent faculties I have detected in her; wait till she has been influenced by me and by the life she will lead with me; wait till she feels the new ground under her and becomes her full self. Then, perhaps, you will change your views. I have decided nothing; but I declare to you that, from considerations with which you are unacquainted, I am particularly drawn to her. Remember, she is by birth a lady—which I am not." If, then, I have been able to lift myself to my present state, it ought to be infinitely easier for her to acquire grace and charm."

"A German acquire grace and charm!" sneered Jules Jelle.

"I do not doubt that she will acquire both—although she is a German; in fact, indeed, because she is a German; if she were French she would have them already. For the moment I am studying her by the light of a written description of her which has been sent to me."

"But she is frightful; she is ridiculous; she is odious. Surely you are not going to impose contact with a German on all the people who come into your house? If you attempt that, the whole town will turn against you. To me, as you well know, every German is a demon. My father will not support it; he has told me so."

"Really? How good of your father! I am extremely grateful to him for warning me of his intentions. Now, my dear nephew, will you and your father be graciously pleased to permit me to settle my own affairs for myself? I know exactly what I want—very exactly; and I shall act precisely as I may think best, in order to give myself what I want. I shall not care the value of a passing shadow for anybody's judgment but my own. I shall not even consult the Bishop. I see in Mademoiselle de Rothenfels a capacity of a special kind, which happens to fit in with a certain need that I desire to satisfy. It is for that reason, and also because she is of higher social position than anybody else I could discover, that I am thinking of taking her—in spite of all objections."

"If you do take her I shall cease to regard you as my aunt."

"Provided that, after further consideration," went on Madame Jelle, taking no notice of the interruption, "I am confirmed in my present impressions, and provided that she accepts certain conditions I shall impose upon her, I shall ask her to remain with me, and no power on earth will stop me. Then, Jules, I shall proceed to change her. The operation will interest me extremely. I shall have the enjoyment of creation. Thus far I have only created myself; it must be infinitely more fascinating to create somebody else, because one can follow the process so much more exactly. Your notion of the explosive effect producible in Paris by a German girl has, I acknowledge, a foundation of principle; but, in practice the effect will fade away before the power of money. My dinners and my parties will not be stopped by the presence of a German. I know human nature better than that; and so do you, Jules, at the bottom of your heart. My money will buy everything that men and women have got to sell, even the admission of a Prussian girl among French people. They will complain; but they will come, all the same. Be pleased to let me do as I like, my dear nephew. I tell you I have my reasons."

Jules Jelle went away in great irritation, after declaring to his aunt that he would not return to the house while Mademoiselle de Rothenfels remained there.

Next morning Frieda woke sad and frightened. The situation came before her with a rush the instant she was conscious. She liked what she had been able to perceive of the character of Madame Jelle; she almost trusted her, indeed, for she believed in-

stinctively in her honesty of heart. She was tempted—more absolutely and more clearly than the day before—by the unforseen attractions of the existence set out before her. She no longer doubted that it would pain her gravely to go back to Augsburg and to recommence the search for a position. But notwithstanding these reasons for desiring to remain, she shrank, with a certain anger and disgust, not only from the wounding intimation that her person was defective, but, still more, from the thought that she would have to pass her life with a woman who attached such vast importance to mere outside effect, who had begun by complaining of her box, and had gone on by disparaging her person. To Frieda the "soul-life" had supplied, so far, the one nobility of being. To her, all longing for material ends had seemed inferior tendencies. She recognized (since the day before) that exterior refinements had an undeniable and alluring use; but she persisted in regarding that use as purely supplementary to the working of the spirit, and as fitted only to aid, support, and decorate the spirit. To lift the outside (as Madame Jelle appeared to lift it) to the height of a separate aim, possessing an essence, a merit, and a preciousness of its own, independent of the services it might render to ideality, was, to Frieda, both a folly and a sacrilege. She could not deny—though she was surprised and vexed to be unable to deny—that the spectacle of external attractions had, in twenty-four hours, exercised a marked influence over her; but, though she was forced to admit the action of those attractions within the limits which she assigned to them, she thrust away from her, as monstrous, the

pretension that they could possess any value other than that of subservient adjuncts to a more exalted product. She supposed that to live with Madame Jelle would imply the tacit acceptance by her of the principle that physical delicacies were, in themselves, a final cause. Against that admission her whole nature revolted. Yet—what could she do? What should she do?

Virginie broke in upon her anxiety to inform her that Madame Jelle was occupied, and that she hoped Mademoiselle de Rothenfels would either go out to walk, or would amuse herself in the library until breakfast-time. As Frieda wanted to be alone, and as walking in the streets of Paris meant that Virginie must accompany her, she preferred the library.

Her mind was not curious, in the usual meaning of the word; it lived too much in the sky to be influenced by ordinary inquisitiveness; but it was ardent, eager, and full of glowing desire, not perhaps for fresh knowledge, but for fresh emotions. So, when she looked round the tiers of shelves and told herself she had two hours before her to pull down all the volumes that tempted her, and to extract from them such inspirations as they could kindle, a sensation of warm anticipation grew up within her. Her eyes fell at once on a collection of illustrated folios of travel; she threw herself into them, wandered with them to many corners of the earth, and when she was informed that it was noon, and that breakfast was served, was astounded that time had passed so quickly. She felt, as she crossed the hall into the dining-room, that her employment of the morning had done her good, and that the temporary diversion

of her thoughts into a new channel had given her soothing tranquillity. She greeted Madame Jelle with a smile that came without an effort, and told her she was refreshed and calmed.

Madame Jelle looked at her examiningly, and answered, laughing, that the brightness of Paris was influencing her already. A light talk followed, and when the breakfast was ended and they went together to the drawing-room, Frieda was surprised to notice that her hesitation and anxieties of the morning had almost disappeared, and that there was in her heart a tremor of expectant hopefulness.

After chatting for a while of the books that Frieda had been turning over, Madame Jelle said, "Well, shall we go on again with our own affairs? We must make progress, you know. What counsel has been brought to you by the night?"

Frieda fixed her eyes upon her. She could not mistake the frank expression of kindness, interest, and sympathy that was written on her face. Impulsively, without reflecting, she leaned forward and replied, in an earnest tone that astonished her own ears, "I wish to stay with you."

"And I incline to wish you to stay" was the answer. After a moment of hesitation Madame Jelle added, "Then let us proceed with our discussion. We have a good deal to say before we can finally decide. We must not let mere feeling run away with us."

The soft voice went on—"Yet I should like to speak out to you at once, with the whole openness of my nature. I should like to tell you, simply and straightforwardly, without waiting, the history of my life and of my present principles of action; I should like

to set before you, in clear words, the motives which lead me to suppose that you can be to me the companion I am seeking. But common-sense tells me to wait. I read again this morning, for the eighth or tenth time, that strangely analytical letter from Canon Müller. Really, he must be a very intelligent man to have been able to write it. Each fresh perusal of it makes me fancy that I know you better, that I like you more, and that I hope more from you. You are very tempting to me, notwithstanding your curious peculiarities, notwithstanding your hot temper, which rather frightens me, and although our acquaintance is only twenty-four hours old. And yet it is manifest (if that letter tells the truth) that you and I are, in everything, unlike each other. I said yesterday that there was one point of resemblance between us, because we both love the beautiful; but I see now that even that link does not exist, for, though we do both love the beautiful, we love it so differently and for such divergent purposes, that what we love is in no way the same thing."

"All those who love the beautiful," broke in Frieda, "have in common the adoration of the ideal. The character of the ideal may vary, but the acts of adoration are equivalent. Yes, yes; we love the beautiful together. Do not doubt it. There is that bond between us."

"But I do not love the ideal at all," objected Madame Jelle. "I need it, as I shall tell you later on; but I do not love it. On the contrary, I love reality. Listen, and you will see, as I see, how wide is the distance which separates us. Your conception of existence is to float among mankind as a disem-

bodied spirit; mine is to be a living, acting, glowing woman. Your ambition (do not deny it) is to free yourself from what you conceive to be the defiling contact of the world; mine is to develop and to amplify that contact, in all possible directions, in order to extract from every point of it the multiform enjoyments it can bestow. Your object is to exist exclusively for what you describe as your soul. . ."

"I do not describe it," cried Frieda; "it is impossible to describe it; I only know that it is the source of the ideal in me."

"Your object, I say, is to extract enthusiasms from your soul; mine is to utilize my senses. You, the dreamer, scornfully repudiate reality; I, the woman of the earth, adore reality, and all the varied acts and workings which help to perfect it and to render it deliciously attractive. I tell you frankly that I desire only what you would consider to be inferior qualities; to be intelligent, not intellectual, elegant, not æsthetic; human, not superhuman. I desire, as I have just said, to be a living woman, full of feminine capacities, a true woman, a woman of my time and race, with the qualities and the faults that are proper to her (for a woman's faults, provided they be purely feminine, constitute more than half her charm), and, above all, with the fullest, most exalted power of sensation and enjoyment that can be acquired by a woman. I am a pagan; I want the highest joys of the elaborated new paganism of to-day."

"If we are as different as that," answered Frieda, half shocked at this declaration, but laughing in spite of herself, "and if you are content that neither of us should change, we should have to get on together as

we are. For my part, I believe it would not be difficult to give you satisfaction."

"Satisfaction? How can you tell that? You do not know yet what I want from you."

"I know, at all events, that you will not ask me for anything I cannot perform."

At these words Madame Jelle looked fixedly at Frieda, thought deeply for a moment, and made a movement as if to speak out. But she checked herself, and said simply, "We will talk of that when we have settled everything else. All we have to do for the moment is to see if, in probability, our characters can fit. For that purpose I mean to prolong our preliminary conversations, partly as a precaution, partly because I find pleasure in them."

Frieda would have preferred an immediate solution. Her tendencies were changing under the new influences that were operating on her. She recognized that she was giving way more and more, as the hours passed, to the temptations that surrounded her, and that the need of material satisfactions was growing fast within her. She felt already that she dreamed less and enjoyed more. She wished, she almost longed, to stay.

The conversations went on, however, for six days; it was not till Frieda had been a week in Paris that Madame Jelle made up her mind to say, "Well, I think we have studied each other sufficiently. You please me; you inspire me with confidence, although I am rather afraid of your fiery susceptibility, and a little also of the want of precision and of sequence in your character. I am certain I can make you very attractive personally, and I have real hope that you

can satisfy the particular object I have in view in selecting you, and which I will now explain to you."

Frieda listened eagerly.

"In order that you may fully understand that object, I must begin by telling you the story of my life."

Madame Jelle related the story at full length, described in detail the process of her education, and the phases of feeling she had passed through, and then went on: "You see now the nature of my present want—I want the power of intense sensation. You see now why it is that I am not content with what I have, and why it is that I thirst for more. You see now what, unaided, I have achieved within me, and you see now that I have reached a point where I can mount no further without assistance. That assistance—the aid which is to carry me onwards, and to render me capable of the new and higher joys I covet—I ask from *you*."

Frieda started, and fixed her eyes still more intently on Madame Jelle, who continued with great earnestness: "You are endowed with singularly powerful faculties of sensation; I am not. I need sensation; but, as I have just explained to you, I, in my unsupported self, cannot provide it in sufficient quantities, or in sufficient intensity. I ask you to communicate it to me out of the abundance of your own store, by the exercise of your will. I believe profoundly in infusion by contact, in will-influence; I believe in the power of men and women to shape each other, and to impart to each other—by volition—their perceptivities and their sensibilities; I believe that there is no framer of temperament or sentiment so powerful, so irresistible even, as the intercourse of each hour

with a highly endowed organization backed up by will. And I am certain that your organization is exactly made to act on mine, and that you have in you the very powers I desire to set to work upon myself. Believing all that, I tell you again that I want you to fill up, by transmission from the overflow of your own essence, the gaps which exist in my constitution. I want to begin by being dependent on you, and to end by becoming independent of you. Lift me to acquaintance with the ideal which has been of such service to yourself; exercise your will upon me in order to convey to me some share of your own great gift of emotional felicities. You see, I do not take you as an ordinary companion; I need no companion; I suffice for myself, and can do everything for myself—except this. What I do need is an imbuer, an impregnator. That is what I want you to be to me. What do you answer?"

Frieda had listened with growing bewilderment. Each successive sentence had increased her stupefaction. She remained silent from sheer incapacity of answering. After a while Madame Jelle asked again, "Well, what do you say to my explanation?"

With an effort, a hesitating reply came at last. "I say that your tale is extraordinarily interesting, but that you ask me for the impossible. I do not deny that I believe, somewhat, in the faculty of certain persons to infuse their will into others, and to make those others feel what they feel themselves. But I am not one of those persons; I enjoy no such faculty. Furthermore, I am too ignorant on the subject to be in any way prepared to discuss it with you. I have never had an opportunity of hearing anything

about it excepting in the most general and uninstructive terms. And, finally, it seems to me that it might be wrong for me to try. Our objects are entirely different. The idealism in which I have sought, hitherto, to hide my life was the refuge of an outcast. Your theories of new emotion, as you have just defined them, are—if you will permit me to say so—the luxuries of a sybarite."

"No, no, mademoiselle," cried Madame Jelle, "that is not the truth. Like yourself, I was at first an outcast. I rose by money to enjoyment, as you have the opportunity of rising now. I may have carried to an unusual height my need of both material and spiritual delights, but I have always used intelligence to guide that need; never have I put luxury above reason. Therefore I am not a sybarite. We both desire to extract pleasures from emotion; our processes are different, but the results we pursue are identical."

"Identical?" echoed Frieda, in a tone of protestation.

"Yes, certainly. Do I not wish to introduce the ideal into my existence as you do?"

"Indeed no; not as I do. I cannot admit that. To me the ideal has been a devoted friend, holding out its succoring hand in pain; it has been to me a haven and a temple. To you it would be a mere additional diversion. I feel instinctively that, in principle, it would be almost a sacrilege to try to communicate idealism; and that, in practice, I individually have not the power to communicate it."

"And I, on the contrary, am convinced that it can be acquired by contact with those who possess

it, and that you, particularly, are capable of infusing it into me. As for the sacrilege," she added, with a smile, "I am ready to bear the responsibility of it. Will you try?"

Frieda was unable to reply. She looked anxiously, frightenedly at Madame Jelle, who, to encourage her, went on again: "Understand that all I ask of you is to do your best. Answer me on that single point, and leave the rest to me. All I want is to be sure that, honestly and affectionately, you will put your will at my service, and that you will use it, so far as in you lies, to convey to me some part of your own emotionality."

The more Frieda reflected about this strange proposal, the more did it seem to her unrealizable. At Augsburg she would have refused indignantly to lend herself to what would have appeared to her there, even more strongly than in Paris, to be a desecration of her dream faculties; but the influence of her new surroundings had changed her more than she knew. She longed so keenly to stop where she was that she had become ready to accept conditions in order to attain that end; she told herself that, after all, no principle would be involved by her acceptance; what she was asked to do did not touch her pride, her name, her nationality, her honor; no disgrace, no shame, however small, no regret even, could attach to the experiment she was asked to undertake. As to its being "wrong," that was really an exaggerated scruple. Her hesitations weakened. She could not make up her mind to return to Augsburg for such a motive; other reasons might have sent her back, but not this one. At last she said in a low voice, very

gravely, "I shall not succeed; but I will do what I can."

"That is enough, my dear child," was the prompt reply. "From this moment you are my companion and friend. I will try to make you very happy."

Thereupon Madame Jelle rose, walked to Frieda, and kissed her forehead.

Frieda felt suddenly an immense relief.

On entering her room before dinner she found a letter on the table. It said—

"There are matters on which I must inform you, but about which I had rather write than speak.

"You must allow me to include the cost of all your purchases in my own bills, with the double object of saving you trouble, and of judging myself of the extent and nature of your necessities.

"For your pocket-money three hundred francs a month will be placed at your disposal.

"Virginie is your own maid. If you are not satisfied with her she shall be changed.

"A boudoir will be arranged for you to-morrow next to your bedroom.

"I ask you to express to me every desire that arises in you, so that I may try to satisfy it. Whatever I may be able to do for you will be very little in comparison with what you may do for me."

Frieda murmured to herself, incoherently, after reading this—"She is really very, very kind. I am deeply grateful to her. I think she will make me love her very much. I may be almost happy with her. But how am I to carry out this extraordinary function of soul-prompting that she imposes on me? It is extremely delicate of her to have written me all

this instead of speaking it. Oh, my dear grandmother, if you, too, had known a little of the material gratifications amid which I have fallen!"

Throughout the evening Madame Jelle was gentle, almost tender. Her voice sounded softer than ever as she talked of the details of what was to be done next day to form Frieda's wardrobe.

In the morning Frieda wrote a long letter to Canon Müller. She detailed to him, with German minuteness, all that had occurred since her arrival in Paris, told him what Madame Jelle desired of her, and finished her report by the following remarks:—

"I cannot pretend to have received, as yet, a sufficient impression of the character of Madame Jelle. Time has been too short, and my inexperience makes me hesitate. Still, to some extent I have seen into her, because circumstances have led her, as I have told you, to explain a part of herself to me. I do not believe her to be selfish, as she asserts she is; on the contrary, she seems to me to be naturally kind, thoughtful even, and considerate for others. The extent of her self-education is wonderful; in no country but France could a woman raise herself, as she has done, from nothing to so much. She is singularly intelligent, talks very well, is keenly capable of management, and is endowed with great business skill. With all this there are tendencies in her which displease me. Her glorification of the sense-life offends me. She declares, without any shame, that she is a pagan, and that she lives for nothing but enjoyment. Thus far I have detected in her no sign of noble visions: she longs for sensation, that is all. This stupefying proposal that she has made to me will, by

itself, give you a more striking impression of the condition of her thoughts and needs than any picture I could paint of it. All the same, she is undeniably lovable, and I feel strongly drawn towards her. Later, when I have seen more, I will tell you more. Meanwhile, I am far more satisfied than seemed possible when I left you. I think I can remain here—unless, indeed, anything occurs to affect my honor as a German; on that point I will never yield one inch. A new world—a world of tempting graces—has opened out before me; I confess that it attracts me extraordinarily. I had never seen the reality of elegance; but I find, now that I have seen it, that it is even more beautiful than what fancy had depicted to me. Pray for me. Lay, in my name, the flower I enclose on dear grandmother's grave; I have kissed it for her."

While Frieda was writing this letter, Madame Jelle was in conference with her dressmaker. On the arrival of that eminent artist she had said to her—"Sit down, Madame Urbain. I have a mission to confide to you. I am about to introduce you to a new customer. She is German. She is so whitely fair, and such a misty vision—her vaporous person is susceptible of such particular effects of treatment, that you have before you a task of extreme interest, but also of extreme difficulty. This young lady cannot be handled, Madame Urbain, as if she were anybody else. You have to create the unknown for her; you have to dress a dream. I doubt whether that has ever been done before. I must, however, warn you that your first impression, when you see her, will not be in harmony with my description—for she is covered at this moment with the strange array of

her native land. But study her, Madame Urbain—view her with the spirit of prophecy—see in her the possibilities of the future, not the realities of the present. Produce for her a series of compositions appropriated to her special self, and worthy of the trust I place in you. As she happens to be in deep mourning, your first efforts will necessarily be restricted to black."

Madame Jelle rang the bell, and told the servant to inform Mademoiselle de Rothenfels that, if it did not disturb her to come down, she would be glad to see her in the drawing-room.

The interview which ensued seemed very wonderful to Frieda. It was followed throughout the afternoon by successive discussions with the various other *fournisseurs* who had been convoked by Madame Jelle. At last everything was ordered.

Then Madame Jelle exclaimed, with a sigh of satisfaction—"In four days a first supply of all strict necessaries will be delivered. As soon as it is in your possession we will start for La Saigne. The rest can follow us. Country life will help us to become friends, and will augment your power of influence over me. Now I will write to my nephew and acquaint him with my decision."

CHAPTER IV.

JULES JELLE lived with his father in a gorgeous vulgar house in the Avenue Kléber. He was constantly complaining to his aunt, with his usual violence, that the place exasperated his nerves and disgusted his tastes, and that he abhorred it because "it smelt so loathsomely of coarse money;" but, as a matter of family duty, he used it for his home whenever he was in Paris.

His father was an astounding model of a *parvenu.* His head had been turned by success; prosperity had driven good sense entirely out of him; it had become replaced, as the motor of his life, by conceit. After his brother's death he had sold the screw business, had bought a *château* in Picardy, had got himself elected to the Chamber, and had become impressed with the conviction that fate had destined him to be a statesman, and to found a dynasty of Jelles. He changed his whole system of existence, forgot the simplicity of his early life, began, as he said, "to be," and swelled with vain-glory. Short-legged, round-armed, flabby-handed, blear-eyed, weak-mouthed, self-sufficiency oozed out all over him, out of his face, his attitudes, and his phrases. He never ceased to strut, even while he lay in bed.

When Jules received his aunt's letter, informing him that Mademoiselle de Rothenfels was to stop

with her, he took it to his father, exclaiming, "She is insane. I have always known that she was capable of any folly to amuse herself; but this one is outrageous."

"Yes, Jules, yes," replied the father, pompously, sententiously. "The family—that is to say, we two, who are thus far the only representatives, the primordial representatives, of the family—will suffer from what you describe correctly as this outrageous folly. Those who, like myself, enjoy the perilous honor of being harnessed to the chariot of the State, are especially exposed to the poisoned shafts of malignant envy; and I do not doubt that my name, which has become known to contemporaneous history as that of an important member of the Legislature—I may, indeed, say as that of a valued servant of our glorious land—will be assailed in the public press, and held up to unmerited contumely, because of this most indefensible act of my brother's widow."

"Of course there will be an outcry; there ought to be; I hope there will be, when the thing gets known," went on the son. "To take a German to her heart and home is a crime as well as a folly. Nobody will endure it. Most certainly, I will not."

"I recognize in your patriotic words, my son, the spirit of devotion to the country which led you in '70, though you were so young, and though I had purchased a substitute for you, to volunteer and take up arms against the foe. That anybody of the honored name of Jelle should fail in love to France is indeed an anguish to me. Jean, my ever-lamented twin, must at this instant be turning painfully, in sympathy with our shocked feelings (he was embalmed, you

remember), in the marble mausoleum I built for his remains. Do you propose to answer her letter?"

"I suppose I must. After all, I love her tenderly, and, no matter what else she does, I shall go on loving her. I shall quarrel with her savagely, but we shall make it up again. I can no more live without her than she can get on without me. A real rupture between us is impossible. Yes, I shall answer her letter; but I shall not go near her for the present. Besides, she says she is starting for La Saigne."

"Of course, of course, my son, you cannot quarrel with her. Her fortune is destined naturally to come to you; and, deep as is the wound she is inflicting on the noblest of our sentiments—for, Jules, fidelity to our native land is, or at least ought to be, the noblest of our sentiments—it would be imprudent, uncalled for, I may even say absurd, to throw away your prospects of inheritance because your aunt is unpatriotic."

"My dear father, I have had occasion, more than once, to tell you that I love my aunt for herself, not for her money. She has been a tender, devoted friend to me, and I should be a brute if I were not fond of her. She may do what she likes with her money; I care absolutely nothing about it; but she offends my entire nature to its roots by seating this odious Prussian at her side."

"Certainly, certainly, Jules. I quite agree with you. You ought to love your aunt. It would be highly improper if you did not, considering that she is the widow of my lamented twin. But you may as well keep sight of the inheritance. It is very large."

"I repeat," replied the son, impatiently, "that I will never give a thought to it."

"I disapprove your unwise language, as I have disapproved it already. We will not prolong this conversation. Besides, I must go down to the Chamber and explain to my colleagues that I am in no way responsible for the conduct of my most un-French sister-in-law."

"You need not be in a hurry to do that. No one has heard a word about it yet."

"True, true; but still, I have it in common with the wife of Cæsar that I must be above suspicion. In fact, I may say, as a general rule, that all personages who take a place in history, whether it be myself, or Cæsar, or anybody else, should be above suspicion. In the speech, the remarkable speech, which I delivered on 20th June 1888, and also in the still more striking discourse I pronounced on 11th January of the present year, I laid down, amid great applause, the exalted principle that a Deputy of France must be above suspicion. I did not mention Cæsar's wife on either of those occasions, but next time I will. I must make a memorandum of it."

He drew from his pocket a note-book kept there for the purpose, and wrote in it, "Introduce in my next oration on devotion to France and the Republic, a parallel between myself and Cæsar's wife, and any other suitable notabilities of antiquity. *P. S.*—Instruct my secretary to search for other suitable notabilities."

Then they parted. The father drove to the Palais Bourbon. The son strolled into the library and sat down to meditate.

"It is very cruel to be unable to respect my father," was the first thought that crossed his brain. "As a screw-maker he was a man of fair reason and capacity. As a Deputy he is a caricature. My aunt, with all her exaggerations, and with her utter indifference to the opinion of others, is thoroughly lovable. My father, alas! with all his glorification of principles, has destroyed his better self by what he imagines to be politics. Why are politics so deleterious to the natures of Frenchmen? They do not damage other Europeans to the same extent. But, after all, what on earth does it matter to me? If it satisfies my father to be a Deputy, and to believe that the universe waits pantingly for a speech from him, I ought to feel, I suppose, that he is right to take his pleasure where he finds it. Of course there must be people to do that sort of thing; it may as well be he as anybody else. Still, it is very hard to be obliged to despise him—the hardest fate, perhaps, that can befall a son. Struggle as I may, I cannot blind myself to the fact that he is ridiculous. Well, it is useless to brood over it. What shall I do with my afternoon? I am not in a mood to rub against acquaintances. If I had not quarrelled with my aunt, I should have gone to her to quiet myself down. As it is, I must remain alone with my ill-temper—as happens to me, indeed, rather often. I will walk to St Cloud. That will give me time to ponder on the absurdity of all things."

As he strode out through the Bois his ideas were dragged backwards and forwards between his longing to patch up his dispute with his aunt, and his fierce determination to see no more of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. It was difficult to conciliate the two,

now that the arrangement was completed for the latter to remain with Madame Jelle. So, when he got back, tired and muddy, he was in even a worse temper than when he started.

The inflated conceit with which his father talked at dinner made him more angry still. His exasperation became so great that it was with difficulty he sat quiet.

"Yes, my son," said Jacques Jelle, waving his fat hand slowly in the air, and listening with evident delight to the sound of his own voice—"yes, I stated my conviction with emphatic precision to the Russian ambassador last night, when I met him at the Presidency. I remarked to him, 'Excellency, our period is an era of momentously pregnant history'—I said, 'momentously pregnant history,' Jules; and as that most powerful phrase appeared to me to be of high political sonority, I inscribed it in my note-book. 'The future of the world,' I continued in an impressive tone—I always endeavor to be impressive, Jules,—'of the whole world, Excellency, depends, at this fundamentally critical instant, on the unshackled will of his Majesty the Czar. Yes, Excellency, the pulse of the earth is beating—beating—in fact, is beating, and his Majesty, the most august Master of your Excellency,'—you may not be aware, Jules, that an ambassador invariably describes his sovereign, in official despatches, as his 'august Master,'—'is the expert physician who feels that pulse.' I said that, Jules; I said that."

Jules twisted in his chair with shame, but he answered, as if he were interested, "And what did the ambassador reply?"

"His Excellency made to me, my son, one of those admirably suggestive responses, full of concealed but transparent meaning, for which he is celebrated, and which put in evidence the ever-present action of his discreet skill. We statesmen, on the prudence of whose tongues hang the destinies of peoples (I will note that down), are all obliged to employ ambiguous but not always comprehensible language, and his Excellency was, of course, consummately dexterous in the terms he employed. I imitate him, Jules; I imitate him; I regard myself as his pupil. He looked at me with meaning, let fall the significant syllables, 'You think so, do you?' and walked away."

"Well, if you are satisfied, I have nothing to say," growled his son between his teeth.

In the evening Jules took up a pen and asked himself what answer he was to make to his aunt. He found he was incapable of putting together a single reasonable sentence. He got as far as, "My dear aunt;" but that was all he could produce. So, in extreme disgust with himself and with everything around him, he put off the effort till the morning.

But in the morning the difficulty was the same. Every word he wrote was violent. After several trials, he started up from the table, "Why am I unable to lose my temper in decent language? It is humiliating to be so incompetent when I am in a rage. I cannot allow my aunt to start for La Saigne without either writing to her or seeing her. I had determined not to go near her; but, after all, the situation cannot be left as it is. Until breakfast-time she is certain to be alone, so I shall not risk a meeting with that abominable Prussian. I will go."

He found Madame Jelle in her study, making up accounts. She laughed when he came in, and said, "So the prodigal son has come back again!"

"Come back!" snarled Jules. "What else am I to do? I did not want to come, and I did not mean to come. But, frankly, I could not manage to compose a reply to your letter without putting into it all sorts of brutalities; and I could not let you leave Paris without either sending you an answer or coming to see you. As I was powerless to write, I have come."

"And what have you to say, my most agreeable nephew?"

"I have to repeat what I told you the other evening, that your selection of this horrible creature to live with you is an act of insanity. You ought to be locked up."

"How nobly just you are, Jules! Permit me to admire the marvellous equity you exhibit in using this language to me without having the faintest knowledge of my motives."

"Motives? You talk of motives? No motives—no matter what they be—can justify a French woman in taking a German to her side."

"That, if you please, is a matter of appreciation. I happen to have reasons for choosing Mademoiselle de Rothenfels which, in my eyes, override the reasons for not choosing her. As it is my personal affair, I decide for myself."

"May I presume to inquire what those wonderful reasons are?" asked Jules, with unconcealed disdain.

"They do not concern you, and you would not understand them."

Jules raised his arms, let them fall again with a movement of despair, and exclaimed, in a tone of concentrated anger, "With all my affection for you, I cannot go on with this miserable conversation. It afflicts me too profoundly. When do you go away?"

"As soon as Mademoiselle de Rothenfels is dressed. In three or four days, I hope."

"Well, I am glad of it, for your absence will separate us in a natural manner, without a quarrel. I cannot write to you; your state of mind renders that impossible."

"Then come down to me."

"To spend my hours with Mademoiselle de Rothenfels?" inquired Jules, bitterly.

"About that you could do as you liked. She is, by nature, an interesting talker, and I warn you that she is going to become strangely attractive physically. A new life will be implanted in her. The influences which have lifted me to what I am—influences which, as you well know, are peculiar to France, and can be found nowhere else—are working on her already, and have already produced perceptible results. I shall push her through a process of evolution which will carry her far. Paris is a forcing-house for women, provided they have the capacity of growth within them, and are cultivated by a scientific hand; you will see what I shall make of her. But still, as she is to be my companion, not yours, I should not impose her society upon you. Only, you would have to be polite to her."

"Thank you; I will stay here."

"As you please. Try to be in a better temper when we meet again."

Jules Jelle saw his father at breakfast, and informed him that he had been to his aunt, but did not think it necessary to describe the interview. He said simply, "After all, I made no answer to my aunt's letter. Instead of writing I went to her this morning. She has decided to take the Prussian. No argument I could employ produced the slightest effect upon her."

"In that case, my son, all that we have to do on our side is to remain at a carefully calculated distance from her; marking, on the one hand, to the public, by the combined icy dignity and patriotic nobility of our attitude, that we profoundly deplore and entirely disapprove and disassociate ourselves from the conduct of your aunt; but, on the other hand, abstaining, with prudent circumspection, from any act which could convey to your aunt herself an impression of hostility. Otherwise she might alter her will. My patient study of the proceedings of the foreign diplomatists, whom my position as a legislator gives me the privilege of knowing, has opened my eyes to the possibility of producing two contrary results by the same means."

Jules made no reply. His father went on: "All this leads me, leads me naturally I may say—for with you, my son, I exhibit my inmost thoughts, and do not apply any of my habitual diplomatic prudence—to return once more to a subject on which I have spoken to you many times already."

Jules Jelle glanced with suspicion at his father, who took no notice of the look, and went on oracularly: "Life, my son—the life, I mean, of personages like ourselves, of personages of importance in the movement of the world (it is unnecessary for my

present purpose to consider the rest of mankind)—is based essentially on two forces, money and political position. I have earned the first of those forces for myself; our admirable Republic has placed the second at my disposal. That is why I am so convinced a Republican. I cannot deny, I do not attempt to deny—with the frankness which characterizes all my communications to you, I distinctly avow indeed—that the Republic offers me opportunities which would have been denied to me by the repelling exclusiveness of a Monarchy. Monarchy committed the folly—a folly which has destroyed it in our noble France—of restricting the access of power to men—how shall I describe them?—to men of a limited class, who owed their positions to special accidents, such as mere birth, or mere talent, or even mere education. But the Republic, in its far-seeing wisdom, holds out its welcoming hand, both its hands indeed, to all citizens who—who—in fact to citizens whose qualifications are not of that narrow nature—who merit and attract public attention through other channels, through wider, more popularly accessible, and therefore more truly national channels; that is to say, in other words, through nobler and purer channels."

"I fail to comprehend," put in Jules, looking up with a frown. "What nobler and purer channels do you mean?"

"I mean," replied the father, excitedly but authoritatively, "the channels through which I have steered my own bark; the channels of commercial success, of honestly gained wealth, of self-created eminence and fitness—yes, self-created eminence and fitness,—and of the consciousness of personal value—I might almost

say of personal rights—which results therefrom. These channels of political influence which, under the Monarchy, were habitually, though most unjustly, closed to men of my stamp, have been flung open for me by the Republic. Therefore, as I have just said, I am a Republican, a profoundly convinced Republican. Under a Monarchy I might have become nothing; under the Republic I may become anything."

"Ah!" muttered Jules, shutting his eyes and compressing his lips.

"I continue," went on the other. "That is only introductory. My object, on this occasion, is to speak of you, not of me. I mentioned, at the commencement of these observations, that our life is based on two forces, money and political position. It is my ambition that you, the continuator of my race, should possess them both in even larger proportions than have fallen to my own share. To realize that ambition we must apply suitable measures. The process known as marriage—listen to me attentively, my son, for I am now approaching the part of the subject which concerns yourself—wisely understood and skilfully employed, supplies one of the surest means of acquiring those two forces. You know how much I desire to see you utilize that process (provided you do so with sagacity), and how many candidates I have sought out for your inspection. Do let me again urge upon you that marriage, adroit marriage, marriage, I may say, on a statesmanlike and diplomatic basis—for, Jules, henceforth I must direct all my acts according to statesmanlike and diplomatic views—would enlarge and consolidate your future, and would pro-

vide you with additional weapons for the combat, the political combat, which I trust will win for the name of Jelle a front place in the history of our land, perhaps, indeed, of Europe. The moment is most suitable. The Republic, notwithstanding the liberality of its encouragement to its adherents, is in sore need of men of power, of men of—of intellectual might, of men who—who, in fact, are men, that is to say, not ordinary men, but men who are superior to other men. The Government of France, of our noble country, is open to—how shall I express it?—to new-comers, provided, as I have just said, they are men who are—superior to other men. The names of the two Jelles, Jacques and Jules, father and son, may therefore descend to posterity on the wings of fame. You see, my son, that I confide to you my inmost thoughts. We are men of the elevated class to which I refer; we are superior men; we are superior to other men; it would be idle to deny it. In myself I feel it; in you I discern it. We have but to rise. France is waiting for us. For that it is desirable to possess much money. Money gives the intellectual superiority to which I allude. We have a good deal of money already. It is my desire that you should acquire much more, for the earth bows down before the owners of much money, and attributes to them high ability and undisputed superiority. Marry then, my son, to obtain more money, and, therefore, more ability and superiority. I have a plan to lay before you; and as your intimacy with your aunt is suspended for the moment, we can decide everything ourselves without consulting her. Mademoiselle Panot is still available. Turn your attention towards

her. Her father, who would be deeply flattered by an alliance with the Jelles, has told me explicitly that you are exactly the husband he desires for his daughter. Therefore, everything contributes to the advisability of an immediate arrangement."

"Everything except my consent," muttered Jules; "and perhaps the consent of the young lady."

"Oh! as to the young lady, it would be absurd to suppose that she can hesitate," insisted the father, in an absolute tone.

"Well, whether she hesitates or not, I hesitate. No, I do not hesitate, I refuse. Subsidiarily, allow me to observe that I have only seen her once, at a distance, and that I thought her odiously ugly."

"Ugly! What has ugliness to do with marriage?" exclaimed Jacques Jelle, with astonishment. He raised his right hand to his eye, as if to wipe away a tear, and added mournfully, "Jules, you will break my heart."

Jules said nothing, but looked fiercely angry.

"M. Panot," continued the father, after a while, "has given me to understand that, to induce us to accept his daughter, he will add another million of francs to her *dot*. That would make five millions. And much more hereafter."

"I am grateful to M. Panot for his generosity; but I am not for sale."

"No, Jules, of course not. No Jelle could be for sale. But—but I can no longer conceal from you that—that I and M. Panot have settled the bases, the preliminary bases, of an arrangement, and that it would place me in a false position if that arrangement were not carried into effect. I am your father, Jules."

Jules turned slowly round and faced his father. "Do I understand," he asked, "that, without consulting me, you have told this Panot that I will take his daughter to be my wife?"

"No—no—not exactly that. Of course, I should have asked your views before going so far as that. But—certainly—I have led him to suppose that you would not object. How could I conceive that you would object? Five millions down!"

"And Mademoiselle Panot?"

"Mademoiselle Panot! Why, what has she to do with it? If her father gives her five millions, what else can she want?"

Jules Jelle looked his father straight in the eyes, snatched at his hair with both hands, and muttered savagely to himself, "Between my father and my aunt my position is positively hideous. My father insults my heart; my aunt insults my country."

He rose, saying, "I refuse," and left the room.

Jacques Jelle stared after him in bewildered anger. "He refuses!" he exclaimed. "He refuses one of the great industrial fortunes of France! Almost as large as our own! He refuses! and she is an only child, and will have it all! What inconceivable perversity! Five millions down, and at least ten more to come. Frightful! Why, with that, and with his aunt's money and mine, he might be at the head of more than forty millions some day. What a political position! He could buy anybody! And he refuses! Oh, my lamented twin! what would you say to this? It would have placed the Jelles upon a throne. Besides, what answer am I to make to Panot? I have, imprudently, gone too far with him. Nobles may, I dare

say, break promises of that sort; but when two men of business make a bargain, commercial honor obliges them to carry it out."

While Jacques Jelle sat pondering, Jules had started off again to his aunt. The impetuosity of his nature and his long habit of going to talk to her about everything, were stronger than his resolution to stay away from her. Mechanically but furiously, half-unconsciously but exasperatedly, he stamped along to the Cours la Reine. He had no idea why he went, or what he meant to say; but he needed, instinctively, to be with his aunt, and to pour out to her his rankling rage.

When his name was announced, Madame Jelle was sitting in the drawing-room with Frieda. The latter rose, and with a cold bow to Jules went immediately away. Madame Jelle looked with astonishment at her nephew and asked, "What does this mean?"

"This means," he answered wildly, "that I am sick of everything; this means that you and my father between you are driving me mad; this means that my aspirations obtain satisfaction nowhere; this means that I suffer monstrously; this means that my father has told a creature called Panot that I will marry his daughter. I can no longer come to you for a refuge, for peace, for consolation—you have driven me away from you; but I come, because I cannot help myself, to tell you what is happening to me."

"Poor Jules," said Madame Jelle, sadly; "how unhinged you are! Perhaps I can comfort you a little, all the same. Who is the creature called Panot?"

"Why, Panot the ribbon-maker; Panot, who has a frightful daughter; Panot, who has a quantity of millions; Panot, who lives . . . where does Panot live?"

"Yes, I remember ; I have heard of them. Your father told me she would make a perfect wife for you."

"That means five millions down," gnashed out Jules between his teeth, "and more hereafter."

"Well, you know, Jules, in the actual condition of popular opinion, five millions down, and more hereafter, do make a very perfect wife. But am I to understand that your father has really told this Panot that you will marry his daughter?"

"So he has just informed me."

"And what reply did you make to him?"

"I refused, absolutely and flamingly—and I came straight here."

"Hum! hum! Do you want my opinion?"

"No."

"Then, what is it you do want?"

"I want to forget that I have a father and an aunt."

"Poor Jules! you are in a particularly bad state to-day. I must give you some advice, whether you want it or not. Go away for a while."

"I will. Good-by."

Before his aunt could stop him he was gone. That night he started for Constantinople.

CHAPTER V.

"As the first group of necessaries has just been delivered to you, Frieda," said Madame Jelle, two days afterwards, "I think we shall be able to get away to-morrow to La Saigne. Give me a pleasure before we start. Dress to-night for dinner. Extract yourself from your packing-case, and satisfy my eyes and my curiosity by enabling me to make acquaintance with you in another aspect. Deliver yourself to Virginie; she knows her functions; besides, I have given her special instructions; so let her fashion you as she likes. When you are—what you will be, come down to me. I will wait in the drawing-room, so as to see the complete result all at once."

Frieda smiled. She, too, was impatient. She was waiting, with timorous but excited anticipation, for the physical modifications that Paris was to produce in her. The idea of elegance tempted her more and more each day. She had commenced to see in it not only a homage to the life within, but also a satisfaction of the claims of the outer artist self. To her surprise, the outside had come into existence for her. She knew that she had found a strange complacency in trying on the various apparel that Madame Urbain was preparing for her. Among it was the black gauze evening dress that Madame Jelle had prayed her to wear that night. She had been shocked,

like all beginners, at the thought that she would be beheld by others so uncovered; the instinctive shrinking of every girl from appearing for the first time *décolletée* was particularly strong in her. And yet, notwithstanding this hesitation, a movement of unquiet wondering, of fascinated vanity, had entered into her, and it was with a sentiment of agitated, expectant pleasure, that she said "Yes" to Madame Jelle.

She went up to her room and found everything prepared.

Virginie began by the observation, "Mademoiselle must not judge of the effect until I have completed her. As it is the first time, I must ask her to be good enough to be patient. If mademoiselle will trust me I have no doubt I shall be able to produce a result which will give satisfaction to mademoiselle and to madame."

Frieda submitted. But she was disagreeably conscious that, in the eyes of Virginie, she was simply a substance to be moulded.

The process was long.

At last, when all was terminated, when the long gloves were on, when the fan was taken in the slightly trembling hand, she turned away from the dressing-table and moved eagerly, nervously, anxiously, to the cheval glass.

She saw herself at full length, and the spectacle electrified her. In her utter inexperience she felt bashful, yet glorious; timid, yet triumphant. Exulting admiration of herself was mixed with fluttering shyness. The dream of ornament was realized. What art could do for her was done. The transfor-

mation appeared indeed, to her wrought-up mind, to have gone beyond the limits of the possible, and to have almost attained the unachievable. She had no further need to long for satisfaction of her vision of material perfection, for she had reached perfection. Of course there were about her certain awkwardnesses of movement, certain faults of untrained bearing, certain incapacities of carrying with entire naturalness the toilet that had been arranged upon her; her manner showed that she was dressed for the first time. But, of those faults she was unconscious. Neither occasion, nor intuition, had enabled her to become aware that the indifference and the ease which can be acquired only by habit and long practice are as essential to successful dressing as is dress itself. Still, with all these defects, the change in her was immense. Her tall slight figure showed curves and undulations that were new to it. The intense whiteness of her arms and shoulders was startling, especially by contrast with the universal black she wore. Her hair had been tossed into such bubbling curls that her head seemed frothed with wind-blown new-spun flossy silk, amid which was twisted lightly a black ribbon. Her cheeks were flushed. Her lips were parted with excitement. Her eyes were deep with rejoicing glow.

Long, marvellingly she gazed.

At last she cried, "Oh, if my darling grandmother could see me! I am beautiful!"

Then slowly, rather stiffly, she went downstairs.

She thought herself a sylph, a muse. She lifted high her head from mere dignity of sensation. With flattered ears she listened to the rustling of her skirt.

The servants in the hall threw back before her the doors of the drawing-room. She opened rapidly her fan, and with a quivering of the eyebrows, with an effort to be calm which betrayed itself in a still more marked upcasting of the head, she entered.

Before her stood Madame Jelle, awaiting her.

A long, keen, searching gaze swept over her. Every detail was examined by the skilled, penetrating eye. Abashed by the intensity of the scrutiny, Frieda stopped short and blushed.

"I judged you rightly," declared Madame Jelle, at last. "The expectations I had formed are entirely fulfilled. For a first attempt the result is excellent. There are points to be improved; there are errors to be corrected; especially, habit is required. But for a beginner you do very well, very well indeed. Virginie has got you into shape most creditably. Your type is preserved unweakened; you remain yourself; but the self is indeed other in its showing. You look your name. More still, you look your dreams."

Frieda stood silent in confusion.

Next day they went down to La Saigne.

The *château* was a comfortable modern house with good gardens and a small park. To Frieda, who had never lived outside a town, it seemed a paradise. To sit amid flowers in the open air was an unknown gladness to her. There arose from it, in her heart, a fermentation of fresh emotions. She wrote to Canon Müller that she was almost entirely happy.

Before the first week was over the strangeness of her altered life had disappeared; she had entered so completely into it, and even had become so accustomed to it, that she took it as almost due to her.

She became aware—though without consciousness of the process of thought—that, as regarded the material delights of existence, reality was preferable to imagination. She found too—as others had found before her, as others will find after her—that the habit of money grows on us more rapidly, and certainly more easily, than any other routine whatever; and that contact with wealth and its consequences becomes quite ordinary, almost at once, even to those who have suffered bitterly from the want of it, provided only education has fitted them to use it. She forgot that she had been miserable, and lost sight, to a great extent, of the painful past. A curious sensation that she was at home began to grow upon her. Affection increased fast between her and Madame Jelle, whose kindness and attachment to her seemed to gain strength each day, and in whose society and talk she found a pleasure that was completely new to her. Delightedly, she abandoned herself to the complex influences, both stimulating and soothing, both inflaming and appeasing, both teaching and hushing, of the surroundings amid which she had fallen. She asked herself no questions; she simply yielded, acquiesced, and feasted. Her imagination wandered off in fresh directions; her constant conversations with Madame Jelle about the inoculation of sensations from one person to another led her to speculate as to whether she herself could imbibe new sensations from some one else. Her visions no longer pursued oblivion, for she had ceased to have reasons for forgetting; they turned more and more towards fresh perceptivities obtainable through contact with natures more powerful than her own. She told this

to Madame Jelle, who laughed at her, saying, "So I have converted you to belief in will! Then act on me. All that is precisely what I want myself."

Two months passed away, two months of frank confidences, of comparisons, of impressions, of discussions of ideas and ideals, of hearty though unproductive wish on Frieda's part to impress into Madame Jelle some share of her own hot fancies, and of thoroughly productive efforts on Madame Jelle's part to infuse into Frieda the perception and the practice of the refined femininenesses of Paris. They saw little of their neighbors, sufficed to each other, and shrank from interruptions. Frieda began to sing again. Her voice was superb; she had been taught at Augsburg by an old Roman master, whose favorite pupil she had been, and had acquired from him something of the method of the great period of Italian song. Her tones were, at moments, full of stirring passion. Madame Jelle listened to her with ever-growing delight, was won by her splendid power of song, was drawn more and more closely to her, and felt more and more need of her. She perceived that Frieda was not only acquiring rapidly all the components of finished physical elegance, but was developing a charm of sympathy and winningness that she had not possessed before. As Madame Jelle had foreseen, she was becoming a delightful woman.

One afternoon, as they were sitting in the garden, a carriage drove up to the house. From it got out Jules Jelle.

"Why, Jules," exclaimed Madame Jelle, hurrying in astonishment to meet him—"why did you not let me know that you were back?"

"Because I did not mean to come here at all. Because I intended to leave France again at once."

"And yet you have come all the same? How excellent of you!"

"I want to consult you."

"Still more excellent! But let me observe to you that you have taken no notice of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

Her nephew turned and looked. It had not occurred to him that the admirably dressed, very distinguished girl sitting in a basket-chair a few yards off could possibly be the "odious Prussian" he had seen one night at dinner. He started slightly, and took off his hat.

Frieda returned his bow with quiet indifference. An instant afterwards she rose and strolled away.

"I see, Jules, that you are astonished," observed Madame Jelle, as her eyes followed Frieda with a complacent smile. "The change in her, immense as it is, does not surprise me in the least, because I knew, from the first, that it was waiting to come out. You perceive what I have extracted, in this short time, out of what you so politely called her 'barbarous unfitness.' I have not forgotten your words. But this is not the moment to talk of her. When did you get back? About what do you wish to consult me? Are you still my bitter foe? Or have you become a friend again?"

Jules Jelle watched in silence, with surly curiosity, the slender figure of Frieda, as it slowly disappeared among the trees. After a while he turned to his aunt and answered, "I have come back because I cannot

help myself. Even the presence here of that girl has not stopped me."

"Oh, she is no longer a 'Prussian,' but has become a 'girl.' That is a progress. Go on, Jules."

"I reached Paris two days ago. The moment my father saw me, he proposed another wife to me. This time the candidate does not disgust me; so, as I know I shall obtain no peace unless I marry, or go away for good, I have come to talk to you."

"How many millions has she got?"

"Only three or four; and my father, therefore, considers her fortune to be despicable. But he is good enough to take into account that she is an intelligent and agreeable person."

"Do I know her?"

"It is Mademoiselle Trullet."

"Madeleine Trullet? Really she might do for you. She has almost a pretty face; she dresses perfectly, for a young girl; and her figure is altogether delightful. That counts for something, Jules; men like their wives to be well made. What answer did you make to your father?"

"I said at first, as I have always said, that I will not marry at all. But he insisted so determinedly that, for the sake of quiet, I told him I would think about it, and would ask your advice."

"Well, honestly, you might do worse. I fancy you might be reasonably happy with her. She has manners, and she does not look like a fool. And really, Jules, it might pacify you to settle down. Your temper is growing abominable; I had rather you poured out its ragings on a wife than on me; a wife is a natural buffer on such occasions; I learned

that from my husband. A pleasant little companion like Madeleine Trullet might steady you. Besides, after all three or four millions are worth having. Take her."

"If ever I am forced into marriage, I suppose I may as well accept her as anybody else; provided I find her supportable when I make acquaintance with her. But my present idea is to refuse altogether, and to go away for some years—or, at all events, until war begins. Then," he added roughly, "I shall come back and fight."

"Hum! You had better not go away any more. I repeat—marry her."

"If you will give me a room I will sleep here to-night, and will go into it all with you. I have a good deal to tell you about myself; I have been thinking during my journey, and have come back in a strangely reasonable state of mind. There are notions in me now that will please you."

"Then stop with me for a few days."

"Stop a few days with that Prussian? Not I."

"I shall certainly not permit you to stop, even for an hour, if you persist in using that word. It is offensive. Mademoiselle de Rothenfels is a most remarkable and most attractive person. You will not have to complain now of her Teutonic boots; I have converted her feet and hands into sights to dwell upon. Examine them. I am very, very fond of her."

"Fond of a German!" echoed Jules Jelle, derisively.

"Jules," replied his aunt, looking full at him, "there must be an end to this. You will either behave with courtesy and respect towards Mademoi-

selle de Rothenfels, or you will leave my house. I have undertaken to protect her, and I mean to keep my promise. Choose—once for all."

A rush of anger broke over his face; he clinched his fists, and rose violently from his chair. But, after an instant, he sat down again, making an effort to control himself.

"As a proof of the change that is coming over me," he growled out, "I will do my best to be civil to her."

"If you are not civil, you will go. Remember that."

"You seem to be improving her," he remarked, bitterly.

"I am translating her into French, and am composing a very seductive product. If I know anything of cause and effect, she will turn some heads in Paris this winter. Are you sufficiently master of yourself for me to call her to us in safety?"

"I suppose so," was the muttered reply.

"Frieda, Frieda, where are you?" cried Madame Jelle. "We have finished our secrets."

Frieda appeared from behind the shrubs at the end of a walk. As she advanced slowly towards them Jules Jelle stood up and remained bareheaded until she had resumed her place. She bowed again slightly to him, but did not speak.

"My nephew," said Madame Jelle, gayly, "has just returned from Turkey. Do you care to question him about his adventures?"

"I leave, madame, to M. Jelle the choice of what he may be pleased to tell us."

"I have nothing to tell," answered Jules. "Every-

body has seen what I have seen. Constantinople has become a *faubourg* of Paris."

"I was not aware," exclaimed his aunt, laughing, "that Paris stretches now from the Seine to the Bosphorus."

"Paris is the centre of the world's life," proclaimed Jules Jelle, hotly. "Its pulses beat throughout the earth; they warm its farthest limits. Wherever I have been, in all the continents, I have found the air of Paris waiting for me. The English, in their outrageous pride, pretend to carry England with them to every land they visit; it must humiliate them desperately to perceive that, no matter where they go, Paris is always there before them."

"Yes, it must be, as you say, desperately humiliating for them," remarked Madame Jelle, mockingly. "What next, Jules?"

"There is no next. How can there be a next to what is everywhere? The all-pervading influence of Paris is above and beyond proximities; by its nature it stands alone; it is as high and as apart as the sun is in the sky."

"Why, Frieda, even you could scarcely use more gorgeous talk than that. What do you think of my nephew's views?"

"I think that every one ought to consider his own country to be the first."

"Even if it is not so?"

"Even if it is not so. Even if it is, in reality, the last instead of the first."

Jules Jelle's face turned black with sudden fury. He took it instantly for granted, in his fuming susceptibility, that the word "last," in a German mouth,

must necessarily apply to France. He cast at Frieda a look of wild hate. But he managed to restrain himself, and only stammered out, "The classification of countries, mademoiselle, depends on the action of their intellect, not on that of their cannon; on the illuminating, guiding light they shed on others, not on their drill-sergeants."

At these transparent words, Frieda's lips grew tight together; her eyes flashed fire; the dormant battle-spirit dashed up within her; haughtily, she retorted, "I entirely agree with you, monsieur. It is precisely for those very reasons that Germany stands at the head of the nations. She is first in thought, as she is first in arms."

"Frieda, Frieda!" cried Madame Jelle, remonstratingly, "you go too far; it was quite unnecessary to say that. It is my business to defend you, if only you will leave me time to do it."

But Frieda did not leave her time. Pale and trembling, she rose.

"I trust you will consider it right, madame," she murmured in a low voice, "that I should withdraw."

"Why did you provoke her in that brutal way?" demanded Madame Jelle indignantly, directly Frieda was out of hearing.

"Because I abhor her, and could not hide my feelings."

"Then go away at once. You have failed to keep your promise. You shall not stop here. I am deeply attached to that girl; she shall suffer no annoyance in my house."

Furiously he answered, "She declared that France is the last of countries."

"She declared nothing of the sort. It is not true. You had no right whatever to put that meaning on what she said. Your words to her were insulting. You have not behaved like a gentleman."

"Thank you, my aunt."

Before Madame Jelle could add more she saw that a footman was approaching from the house; she waited; he brought a message to her—

"Mademoiselle de Rothenfels will be very much obliged if madame will be so good as to speak to her for an instant in the drawing-room."

"Stop here till I come back," said Madame Jelle sharply to her nephew.

She walked straight in. She found Frieda standing in the middle of the room, very white, very erect, very rigid.

"Madame," she began, "there are circumstances which require instant decision. I must leave you. I entreat you to accept the expression of my profoundest gratitude for all that you have done for me. I shall retain, as long as life is in me, the most intensely thankful, the most heartfelt recollection of your wonderful goodness to me. But—the place of a German girl is not in France. I have just had clear proof of that. I shall return to Augsburg by the next train."

Madame Jelle had started with astonishment at the first syllables spoken by Frieda; she winced and trembled as the words went on; not only did the sentences she heard astound her, but the expression of bitter resolution in Frieda's face terrified her.

Still she was utterly unable to believe in the reality of such a violently sudden, such an incredible, such

an impossible resolution. In bewilderment she seized Frieda's hands, and poured out vehemently—"All this is folly. Jules was grossly wrong. I have told him so. But you were wrong too, and you are wrong again now, more wrong than before. It is needlessly cruel of you to talk of leaving me. We cannot part. I have found in you, for the first time, a woman's friendship. I will not give it up. You know I will protect you."

"Your protection did not suffice just now to shield me," rejoined Frieda, with deep gloom.

"Frieda, you are necessary to me," insisted Madame Jelle, with passionate intensity. "We are necessary to each other. We cannot live apart. How could I return to the existence I led without you? To talk of abandoning me is horrible—horrible."

"I cannot stay," persisted Frieda, almost harshly. "The repetition of insults to my country would stifle me."

"How cruelly unreasonable and unkind you are! I tell you again and again and again," cried Madame Jelle, almost frantically, "you shall not go. There is no cause for it. I will send away my nephew."

"I regret most deeply," reiterated Frieda, in a choked voice, "to be unable to remain. Your nephew's language may be renewed by others. The honor of my name does not permit me to endure it."

"Do you mean to say," gasped Madame Jelle, stretching out her hands in fevered agitation, "that, now that I have found you, now that I know you, now that I love you, I am to lose you?"

"Alas! why has it so happened?" sighed Frieda.

She added, with a return of defiance, "I am German."

"You will go back to Augsburg, to—poverty and misery? You?—you?—after—this?"

Frieda lifted high her head; a blaze of maddening pride was in her eyes.

"Indeed I will, madame. What are poverty and misery in comparison with honor? But this is too frightful. My heart is torn to leave you. I love you tenderly, gratefully; yet I must go. Do not prolong our suffering. Send me, I implore you, to the station at once."

"You shall not go, I tell you!" shouted Madame Jelle, wringing Frieda's hands in a paroxysm of emotion. "Frieda, Frieda, Frieda, it will destroy my peace to lose you—and for such a motive! You must not go; you shall not go! Stay with me; stay with me! I will make you happy, very happy—indeed, indeed I will! My nephew shall leave instantly. But not you, not you!"

"I am torn, lacerated, by your language; it adds to the awful grievousness of my pain. But," added Frieda, in a low broken voice, "my place is not here. I see it now. Too late—too late!"

Madame Jelle let fall her arms. She stepped slowly backwards, her eyes fixed on Frieda. An expression of great dignity, mixed with immense sadness, spread over her. Tears rose to her eyes and ran, unfelt, down her cheeks. With an anguish that shook her entire nature, but with striking nobleness of attitude, she asked, quiveringly—"You mean it, then?—you really mean it? You refuse seriously, definitely, to forgive this, and to stop with me?"

Frieda's head drooped in bitter distress. For some seconds she was silent. Almost inaudibly she moaned, "It is my duty to refuse; I am German."

"If that is so," spoke Madame Jelle, with extreme gravity, "I, too, have a duty to discharge. You listen to the call of your country; I to the voice of my heart. I am more womanlike than you. For what you have done to me during your short presence at my side, I claim the right to be grateful. If my supplications cannot move you; if your national pride is to tear you from me; if you decide—on account of this wretched dispute—on leaving to fresh emptiness a heart that you were beginning to fill, my care, at all events, shall follow you. Shame would suffocate me if, after all that has passed between us, you were to return to want. I could not look myself in the face if you were in poverty and I in wealth. I have a debt to discharge towards you—a debt of responsibility as well as of gratitude. I shall assure your future. A pension will be paid to you by me wherever you may be. And now—if you will go—farewell. May the Spirit of Good protect you!"

Frieda heard, and gazed—breathless. For some seconds she did not seize the full signification of the communication made to her. Then a great wave of burning blood rushed into her pale cheeks; she sprang forward, threw her arms convulsively round Madame Jelle, and burst into tears.

At first she could not speak. When words became possible, she murmured between her sobs—"What? Do my ears hear? You would do *that?—that?*—for *me?* How you must love me! Oh, forgive me!

How high you stand above me! How mean I am before you! I thought of myself; you thought of *me.* I could have faced want again; but I could not live with the consciousness of ingratitude to such a friend as you. You have won me. I am yours—yours forever. This proof of your affection binds me. Keep me. Above all—oh, above all—forgive me!"

"My child, my dear child," stammered Madame Jelle, deeply moved, "I love you, and I tell you so;—that is all."

"That is all? Never did a woman behave more nobly. How can I possibly repay you?"

"By giving me your love—your faithful, unbreakable love."

"Indeed, indeed I do, and will. But—I am so ashamed. Let me hide my face on your shoulder until I dare again to look at you. You would have done *that*—for *me!*"

"Talk of it no more, Frieda. You do not leave me. I want nothing else."

"No, no, I will never leave you—*now.* You tell me to talk of it no more. I will think of it, forever. You do forgive me?"

"Yes, yes, indeed. As you stop with me, I have nothing to forgive."

"I need forgiveness. I feel that I have acted so badly, so unworthily, to such a friend as you. Yet, how could I imagine that you loved me to such a point?"

"I did not know it myself, Frieda. I discovered it when the frightful thought of losing you was there before me. At all events this painful scene has revealed that to us."

"Prove that you forgive me by forgiving your nephew too. I will watch my words, henceforth, so carefully that he shall find in me no pretext for ill-will. You told me once that he is almost a son to you. Yet, you were ready to sacrifice him to me. My own patriotism makes me comprehend his. Indeed I will not offend him. Say that you forgive him—as you forgive me."

"For you, I will forgive him; not for himself. But I must have an explanation with him. Go to your room, dear child. I will rejoin you there very soon."

After a long, tender embrace, they separated. Frieda went upstairs and sat down, exhausted.

"Jules," said Madame Jelle, when she returned to the garden, "Mademoiselle de Rothenfels intended to leave me because of your conduct to her. She has consented to stay, after much resistance. If she had not obtained your pardon from me, I should order you to leave the house instantly."

"If my pardon, as you call it, is only granted to me because Mademoiselle de Rothenfels has asked for it, I decline to accept the pardon. Adieu, my aunt."

He walked away in the direction of the park gates.

Madame Jelle looked after him with perplexity and anger. The scene with Frieda had shaken her, and she felt herself unfit for another struggle. Yet her affection for her nephew was too deep to allow her to let him depart without a word. Instinctively she called to him, "Before you go—that is to say, before we each of us accept the rupture of what has been a great and true attachment—I advise you to

have some talk with me. Wait for a moment, if you please."

He stopped, gazed at the ground, turned and came back slowly.

"A separation between us would be infinitely cruel," he said. "But, under the circumstances, can it be avoided?"

"It cannot be avoided unless you desire to avoid it. I am still unwilling to believe that you are absolutely unable to control yourself."

"That is to say, you will alter none of your own ideas, but think it natural to call on me to modify my entire nature."

"I call on you for nothing of the sort. I claim only that you shall keep your nature to yourself—so far, I mean, as your ferocious patriotism is concerned—whenever you come to my house. Elsewhere you can do as you please. It would pain me grievously, it would sadden my entire life, to have a final quarrel with you. But I can support no more of this."

"My aunt," answered Jules, with an expression of weariness and melancholy in total contradiction to his habitual violence, "I told you I had become reasonable during my journey. If this scene had not occurred, I should have proved to you my reasonableness and...."

"You have a far better opportunity of proving it," interrupted his aunt, "now that the scene has occurred."

"I was going to say that, in my communings with myself, I have recognized that I have been giving way more and more to rage, and that rage is not a

worthy condition to live in. I was going to say to you that, while I am as convinced as ever of the value of my convictions, I am beginning to have doubts as to the practical wisdom of my manner of applying those convictions. I was going to say all that to you, and much more of the same sort, if occasion had offered. But—instead—I have gone on in my old ways. If—out of your own heart, and not because Mademoiselle de Rothenfels intervenes with her magnanimity—you can forgive me, I will try to do better in the future. If not, I must take the consequences of my conduct."

"Do you think you were right in what you said?"

"I think I was very wrong."

"Can I indulge any hope that you will restrain yourself hereafter?"

"I determine—for my own self-respect, as well as out of affection for you—to restrain myself resolutely in your house."

"In that case, Jules, I will grant you one more trial. I forgive you; but it is for the last time."

"My dear aunt, we will not prolong this conversation; it is too painful. Let me add only, that it is my intention, when I see Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, to express to her my regret, and to beg her to accept my excuses."

"There comes out your heart, my Jules—your true heart," exclaimed his aunt, putting her arm round his neck. "Do not hide the good that is in you. Let it stand forth in its full abundance. Do justice to yourself. Forget that Frieda is German; remember only that she is my friend, and that she has a

very lofty character and many powers. Now I will go back to her."

"Jules has behaved well," declared Madame Jelle, as she entered Frieda's room. "I am pleased with him. I am sure he will not repeat his conduct of this afternoon. He has real qualities; but his temper has been so affected by the misfortunes of France that the qualities are hidden by his irritability."

"His attachment to his country proves that he has a heart," remarked Frieda. "With such a heart as *you* have, I can understand that your nephew has one also."

"Well, my dear child, it is over now. It was a great strain to both of us. Pray, never frighten me again in that way; it was altogether too distressing. Kiss me, and forget all about it; only, before you drive it out of your memory, explain to me one point that worries me. Is it true that you could have gone to live in misery elsewhere?"

"Is it true?" echoed Frieda, with astonishment. "Why? Do you doubt it?"

"Surely you do not mean to tell me, as a fact, that after this utter change, after forming these new habits, after shaping yourself to what you are, after satisfying so many of your aspirations, you could have rushed away wilfully to such a trial, simply to satisfy a fancy about Germany?"

Frieda stared at Madame Jelle.

"You surprise me and you pain me," she told her. "You surprise me, because I thought you knew my nature; you pain me, because you speak with carelessness (if not, indeed, with scorn) of the high-

est natural duty we can owe—of the worship of the Fatherland."

"Do you imagine, seriously, that I can have any sympathy for what you call 'the worship of the Fatherland,' when it is precisely that very idolatry that led both you and Jules just now to threaten to abandon me, because your worships disagreed?"

"There are adorations," exclaimed Frieda, her eyes glistening with emotion, "which, under all ordinary circumstances, impose themselves on mankind with such domination, that every other thought and hope fades instantly away when they claim sacrifice." She added, in a ringing voice, "I triumph, I glory in the stately consciousness that I am German!"

"Your spirit vibrates like the harps in heaven," broke out Madame Jelle, watching, with eager admiration, the burning glow on Frieda's cheek. "Oh, if I could throb like that! Oh, if I, too, could pour out wild words! Oh, if I could leap, like you, into enthusiasms about everything—and nothing! And yet," she went on, more quietly, "I am bound in honesty to avow that, though I long to riot in imaginations as you do, there is at the bottom of my thoughts, away in the caverns of the practical 'inner me,' an immense inclination to laugh at you, and to cry 'Ta, ta, ta, how mad you are'!"

"Laugh?" inquired Frieda, softly. "If you laugh, do not seek to feel as I feel. It would be a blasphemy."

"All that is only an accident of position. Supposing that, instead of carrying on your back the legends of centuries of ancestry, you were, like me, the widow of Jean Jelle the screw-maker, you would content yourself with being human. You would not cast

one passing glance at other gods than the pleasures of each day. Yet—yet, you dream, and I do not. Each day brings to you more pleasure than to me. But—answer me; in reality—could you have gone?"

"I could have gone; I should have gone," replied Frieda, in a low voice.

"Poor child!" murmured Madame Jelle, coming to her and laying her hand on her head. "Also, poor me!"

"But I have not gone," continued Frieda, drawing Madame Jelle upon her; "I am still here. I should have returned to Germany, simply and naturally, because it was right to go. I have not returned, because, after your admirable goodness to me, it was still more right to stay. I do not pretend that I should have liked my misery; but I should have faced it calmly, and have strengthened myself against it by dreaming of the days I passed with you—the dream of memory, instead of the dream of imagination."

"Which means that, willingly and knowingly, you would have accepted a pain you could avoid."

"The pain of avoiding it would have been greater than the pain of accepting it. It was not until you cast into the scale the overwhelming weight of your tender solicitude for my future that the measure changed, and that the duty calling me to remain outbalanced the duty calling me to go. I have become your thing. I love you."

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Frieda came down to dinner she found Jules Jelle alone in the drawing-room. He advanced to her, saying, "Mademoiselle, I ask you to forgive me. I venture to indulge the hope that, to a patriot like you, the outbursts of another patriot may seem excusable. Even if you will not pardon me, I beg permission to lay at your feet my very humble apologies."

"Your words do you honor, monsieur," replied Frieda, looking frankly at him. "I forgive you; and I thank you. Let me add that, different as are our points of view, I sympathize with all you feel. Will you take my hand?"

She stretched it to him.

Jules Jelle was in the act of holding out his own when his aunt came in, and saw them.

"A reconciliation!" she exclaimed. "What a lovely picture! I am delighted with you both. Pray do not quarrel any more; it is so excessively disagreeable for spectators. Besides, each of you is worthy to be the other's friend. Jules, give your arm to Mademoiselle de Rothenfels and lead her in to dinner."

The talk was animated. Jules Jelle told stories of his travels, and, on getting back into the drawing-room, he and Frieda had drifted sufficiently out of

discord to be able to discuss together the influence of music on imagination.

"I repeat," insisted Frieda, as they sat down before the first fire of the autumn, "that music lifts us to emotions, and even to intellectual perceptions, that are attainable through no other channel. It is a resounding tongue that echoes through our senses to our souls. It is the sole possible ornament that we can add to the beauties of language; it is eloquence adorned. Its very weakness is its strength; for, as enthusiasm cannot brook precision, its vagueness constitutes its force."

Jules Jelle listened to this outburst with curiosity, and also with a puzzled interest that was augmented by the spectacle of Frieda's fervor. Simultaneously, the elegance of her person struck him vividly, and added the aid of physical charm to the influence of spiritual excitement. He looked at her attentively, forgot, for an instant, that he detested her, and wondered.

"Ah, monsieur," she went on, more slowly and more gently, "in permitting some of us to feel the emotions of music, the Creator has raised for us a corner of the veil which hides the raptures of the Seraphim."

She rose and crossed the room to the piano; she sat before it for a while in silence; then came from her lips the Serenade of Schubert; she gave it with deep passion and immense effect.

At the first notes, Jules Jelle had turned, surprised. As the song went on, as the air filled with the glorious melody, he rose, unconsciously, to his feet and gazed at the singer.

"Strange," he muttered to himself, lowering his eyes; "strange; strange. I believed I knew exactly to what height I could be raised by an influence of this sort. And yet—I have just had a new sensation, positively new; a sensation other and greater than any I have known hitherto from song."

He looked up again. His view fell once more upon Frieda, who had wandered back to the fireside. Her aspect produced on him an effect that surprised him.

German in her whole type and essence; German in her hair and skin and eyes; in the wistful musingness of her manner when unmoved, and even more German still in her moments of agitation,—she had been made delicately French in her outer showings, and had acquired, under the tutoring of Madame Jelle, graces of outline and of finished detail that were becoming fit to satisfy the trained eye of Paris. Her manner and her tone continued to be Germanly dreamy, but her body, its attire, and its movements had been fashioned to the French ideal with such minute attention and such successful skill, that she associated in herself two usually contradictory conditions of women—the poetry of one race, the elegance of another. That night, before the fire, her face and neck and arms and shoulders seeming—in their snowy glimmer—to illuminate the light, the afterglow of her impassioned harmony still looming in a halo round her, she offered to the astonished gaze of Jules Jelle a vision-picture such as he had never conceived.

The thought crossed his mind, "It is a pity to be obliged to hate her."

As soon as he was alone with his aunt his first words

were, "You have succeeded marvellously in your translation into French of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. She has acquired, under your handling, a type of very remarkable elevation. It is difficult to believe that she is the girl who wore those boots. You are a wonder-worker, my aunt. In all mythology there is not a more prodigious transformation."

"Yes," replied his aunt, complacently. "I have been skilful in my sculpture. But I had admirable marble to chisel. I warned you that I should carry her far."

"Her singing, too, is very fine," went on Jules Jelle; "wonderfully fine. She moved me deeply, just now. You know I have always proclaimed that great song is the most enchanting gift a woman can possess."

"Yes, Jules, certainly; you do her justice, at last; my 'translation' is, as you say, a great success, and she does sing superbly. But let us leave that alone and talk of what interests you more. Marry Mademoiselle Trullet!"

"Mademoiselle Trullet!" exclaimed Jules; "positively I had forgotten. Marry her? Before I decide to do that, my aunt, I should like a little information about her. Can you give me any?"

"Hum—not much. She has chatted with me, here and there, at parties, and has made a good impression on me. But she goes principally to Republican houses, where I never show myself. She is not in my set. For that reason I have not seen her people, and do not know what they are like. She, individually, has been taken a little into other society

by her aunt Madame de la Somme. That is how I have come across her."

"If you can tell me nothing, where can I apply for knowledge?"

"You must explore on your own account, if you want details. What do you desire to know?"

"There are such things as temper, education, health, the character of the family, her own ideas of life. her ambitions—if she has any. And—I should like to discover if she can sing."

"There would be an end of marrying in France if everybody were to stop to consider such questions as those. Anyhow, I cannot help you about all that. Make the acquaintance of the young lady and study her yourself. I shall be back in Paris next week, and I will find excuses for asking her to come in, so that you may meet her. Go on with the affair; we will work at it together."

When Jules Jelle got home the next day he told his father he was ready to examine the idea of a marriage with Mademoiselle Trullet, and that his aunt was coming up to help him.

"Your aunt is coming up to help!" exclaimed the father, with some alarm. "But—will she expect us to go to her house to meet the Trullets? Is it possible for me, in my political situation, to be seen there while the German is with her? The Ministry is tottering; a new Cabinet will be needed soon . . ."

"That will be the third this year," interrupted Jules.

"A new Cabinet will be needed, I say. The country knows that I cannot be passed over any longer, that my capacities are essential to the Republic, and

that I shall be summoned to take a place in the coming Ministerial organization. Your own political future will be influenced thereby. I shall make you my secretary—the secretary of a Minister! In such a grave conjuncture my prospects might be imperilled if I seemed to approve your aunt's choice of a German companion. How then can I go to the Cours la Reine?"

"My aunt did not tell me that she wants you to go."

"But, my son, in a matter so closely affecting the future of the race that I have founded; concerning, as it does, the hereditary transmission of the name of Jelle—for, Jules, you are, after me, the sole representative of our lineage, and its perpetuation, in a historic sense, depends upon your marriage—it is to be desired, that is to say, it would be desirable, that all the members of the family—I mean myself, yourself, and your aunt, though she is not of our blood—should combine our efforts in order to achieve a satisfactory, a mutually satisfactory, arrangement of the conditions of perpetuation."

"Then let us combine," replied the son, wearily.

"Combination implies unity of action; without unity of action there can be no combination. Consequently, my dear colleagues—you see, the constant habit of speaking in the Chamber reveals itself even in my most intimate discourses, and leads me, unconsciously, to speak of yourself and your aunt as 'my dear colleagues'—consequently, without combination with your aunt there can be no unity; with a German there can be no combination; whence results the contrary of unity, that is to say—I mean—in fact—of course, what is not unity."

"Then we will not combine," sighed the son, very sadly.

"Yet, on the other hand, there is the grave question to which I have alluded in previous speeches I have made to you; there is the question of so acting as not to imperil your destined inheritance of your aunt's fortune. Your aunt is a person of much susceptibility —towards me; she is easily offended—by me; and the vaster my position, the more, naturally, will she be offended. To abstain, from motives of high political import, from presenting myself at her fireside while it is soiled by the presence of a national foe...."

"I assure you she no longer looks like a foe—quite the contrary," put in Jules, with a bitter smile.

"Might arouse in her a sentiment of irritation."

"Then, once more, let us combine."

"Yes, Jules, after all, you are right. Combination is the wise solution. It will have an influence on Trullet. It may make him increase the *dot*. We will combine. Besides, nobody need know that I meet the German. The true combination, a combination worthy of a statesman and a Jelle, will be to preserve family unity while avoiding political damage. I am equal to it, Jules; I feel that I am equal to it. In fact, the more difficult the combination, the more equal do I feel to it. I will do my duty as the head of the Jelles. I will dine with your aunt—that is to say, if she invites me."

A few days later there was a small dinner in the Cours la Reine. Mademoiselle Trullet, Jules Jelle, and the two fathers, were the guests. It was what is known in France as "a dinner of observation." The only person who did not "observe" was Frieda.

The other five, divided into two groups, took an exact measure of each other.

At half-past ten the Trullets left, and Frieda, feeling that she was rather in the way, went discreetly to her room. Then began the comparison of impressions between the Jelles.

"Well, Jules," exclaimed the aunt, "I repeat with still more conviction, marry her. She will do. What do you think of her yourself?"

"I think," he replied, meditatively, "that she is intelligent, that she has a good deal of physical distinction and that, possibly, she may have a heart. I think, also, that she did her very utmost to seem unconscious and to be attractive, and that she succeeded fairly well in both directions—especially in the latter. I do not dislike her. I looked at her, indeed, with a certain pleasure."

"Her father has assured me," put in Jacques Jelle, "that the spectacle of this palatial residence, and the very noble elevation—almost imperial, I might say, if such a word were not out of place in the austere mouth of a Republican—of the waiting at table, have increased his previous ambition for an alliance with the Jelles."

"What is the use of talking about the father?" remonstrated Madame Jelle. "He counts for nothing—except as banker—any more than you do. The girl was faultlessly dressed; the lines of her figure are charming. I must ask her who makes her clothes."

"I listen with emotion to your judgment, Rosalie," observed the father, "and rejoice that you consider the young person (whom I have selected, although you assert that I count for nothing) to be worthy to

bear the name of Jelle, and to assist in transmitting it to posterity."

"I consent to go on," said Jules. "But I can make no promise. I must examine her further."

"My son, you are well aware that it is not in harmony with usage that what you call 'examination' should be prolonged. You have just passed three hours in the same room with Mademoiselle Trullet; you have sat at her side at dinner; you have talked to her, and have looked at her carefully. You have had, therefore, an altogether exceptional opportunity of discerning her suitability; and her father is now justified in calling on me for a definite reply. I have told him, I will settle on you a sum equal to what he gives his daughter."

"Thank you. But, all the same, you must permit me to learn a little more before I give up my life."

"Learn more! What more can you learn?" was the testy reply. "I have told you all about the family. The fortune has been honestly gained. The young lady has been well educated. Your aunt, who is a capable judge, assures you that she is admirably dressed. She is to have four millions. What else can you want?"

"I want, if you please, to be reasonably sure that I shall be acting wisely in taking Mademoiselle Trullet for my wife."

"Jules!" ejaculated the father, tragically, "you have been a pride to me at certain moments of my existence, and a sorrow at others. This is a moment of sorrow—I might say, of torture."

In order to give substance to the declaration, he assumed a harrowing aspect of steadfast agony.

His son glanced at him, averted his eyes again, and muttered, "I regret that my prudence pains you. All I can say is, that I am ready to continue to see Mademoiselle Trullet, and that I will acquaint you with my decision as soon as I have formed it."

He added, with violence—"If that does not satisfy you, I shall withdraw from any further consideration of the matter, and shall leave France instantly."

Jacques Jelle raised his eyes and arms, as if to appeal to the cupids painted on the ceiling against the iniquitous obstinacy of his son.

Next morning Frieda told Madame Jelle that she had been talking the evening before to Mademoiselle Trullet about singing, and that, perhaps, they might be able to try duets together.

"The very excuse I wanted," exclaimed Madame Jelle. "Write to her at once, my dear child, and ask when she will come in to practise with you. That will enable me to bring about, in the most natural manner, some meetings between her and Jules."

When the attempt was made three days afterwards, it turned out that Mademoiselle Trullet had no voice, and could not sing in tune; but Frieda bore the trial silently, out of devotion to Madame Jelle, professed even to be pleased, and the duets went on. Jules Jelle, under pretext of enthusiasm for music, was present on each occasion.

The result was that, influenced unconsciously by the ideas and practices of his country, he ended by yielding to his father, and consented to the marriage.

The engagement was formally announced, and Madame Jelle, relieved of further attention to the

subject, began to see her friends, and to talk of her coming dinners.

For Jules Jelle the engagement meant, according to French usages, that it had become his duty to go every afternoon to Mademoiselle Trullet, to offer her a bouquet at each visit, to talk politely to her in the presence of her mother (who, being in weak health, was never to be seen except at home), to ask her whether she wished their future drawing-rooms to be furnished in red or yellow, whether she preferred bay or chestnut horses for their carriage, and to call her ceremoniously "Mademoiselle." Furthermore, he had to dine two or three times a week with the Trullets. He found all this absurd and disagreeable; it was either too much or too little; he was not in love with Mademoiselle Trullet; he only liked her fairly well, and he had the sensation that he was acting an unworthy comedy. However, as that was the accepted manner of proceeding before marriage, as everybody else had to do the same, he was powerless to change anything; all he could do was to try to console himself by going a good deal to his aunt, and by dining with her whenever he was free. He saw Frieda often, looked at her, chatted with her, listened to her song, and forgot that he hated her. In this desultory wise three weeks passed away.

One morning Jules Jelle was sitting at his writing-table, his head resting on his hands, endeavoring vainly to recognize what his thoughts were. He had a vague impression that he had drifted into a blunder, but he was utterly incapable of measuring it exactly. He was conscious, wanderingly and uncertainly, that the blunder was that he was going to be married in

order to satisfy his father, and not because he felt the faintest wish for a wife. He perceived, in a mist, as an obligatory but encumbering element of his coming life, a very slight young lady with fair hair, sometimes in pink, sometimes in white, sometimes in blue. That young lady represented marriage and the future. The picture seemed to him nonsensical; it corresponded to no necessity of his nature; there was nothing in it that looked to him like realizable fact; it was a fantastic concession to other people's wishes. Had he not better run away?

Amid these obscure ponderings, suddenly, without any apparent origin or starting-point, the image of Frieda came up before him, the sound of her song echoed around him. Already, several times, it had so happened to him, inexplicably. As he always told himself he hated her; as he was convinced that, of course, he really did hate her—because it was a duty of patriotic principle and of national obligation to do so,—these seeming recollections could be nothing else than silly aberrations, resulting from no perceptible processes of reflection, baseless, without substance. They were as reasonless, as causeless, as the walnut which once presented itself to the mind of St. Theresa in the midst of an ecstatic contemplation, or as the forgotten details of the past which dart across the memory of a drowning man. They were thought-freaks that he despised, but could not control.

Yet, as he grasped his hair with rage that morning (he had the habit of pulling at it when he was excited), he perceived that, in spite of his efforts to dominate his fitful fancies, in spite of his indignation against himself for harboring, even during a passing

instant, such unworthy, such contemptible illusions, the slight girl in black persisted in standing out before his eyes, and effaced the slight girl in pink, or white, or blue. His resolute intention was to forget that "the German" existed; but he saw and heard her all the same,—not constantly, not steadily, but by starts, capriciously, as wind-gusts come; not designedly, not consentingly, but automatically, irresistibly. This was the fifth or tenth time—he had kept no account, but he knew it had been often—that these puerile visions had twisted snakily through his head. They disgusted him; he could not forgive himself for being unable to drive them out.

If such imageries had stood up before him in the shape of material objects, he would have struck at them in his anger, and have destroyed them fiercely; but he was powerless to crush a passing hallucination or tear it into pieces; its very unreality and falseness protected it from his wrath.

At last he sprang to his feet, dashed his fist upon the table, and cried out—"I will go and talk about it to Yaransk. He bullies me and irritates me, and I suspect that I am beginning to hate him; but he is sharp-eyed, and sees into me far more clearly than I do myself."

Six years before, Jules Jelle had slipped and fallen as he was scrambling by himself on the Zœsenberg, and had been picked up and carried to Grindelwald by another climber and his guide. The other climber was a Russian, Dmitri Alexandrovitch Yaransk. After the accident he had nursed Jules; the latter, in his gratitude, and with his habitual effervescence, had become warmly attached to his "saviour," and,

for a time, the two had been warm friends. Jules discovered with delight that Yaransk abhorred Germany even more passionately than he did himself, with the addition of a personal ferocity which gave to his aversion a peculiar savor of malignant savageness. With this bond between them they had sworn eternal fidelity to each other and their cause, and talked of little else than the joy of seeing Germany destroyed, of the gain to European civilization that, according to their view, would result from her suppression, and of the settlement of the destinies of mankind by an all-conquering alliance between France and Russia. In the acute development of race animosities which has spread of late so widely about the Continent, they saw natural means to the end they longed for, and discussed, with fervid interest, the eventualities of the coming universal war.

But this happy state of union did not endure. They were too different and distinct to be able to remain permanently in sympathy. Jules Jelle, open-hearted, unstable, impetuous, blundered through life under the action of his impulses, and was the slave of the feeblenesses of his own nature. Yaransk, self-contained, mysterious, cold-blooded, calculated the effect of his every word and act. Jules Jelle, with all his natural wildness, brooded, fretted, but never had a doubt. Yaransk, with much affected calm, derided, scoffed, and disbelieved. The Frenchman saw all his objects through the light of his own emotions, and, because he felt emotions, was convinced that he was in earnest. The Russian pursued his aims without emotion, but with his whole will, his full intensity. In one, the horror of Germany

was a half-frantic mania; in the other, it was a steely purpose. Between them they supplied fair examples of two of the advanced forms of contemporaneous international hate.

As an almost necessary outcome of these differences of character, Yaransk, the strong, dominated Jules Jelle, the weak. At first he had merely advised him; after a while, he had taken to guiding him; he had ended by tyrannizing over him. Jules Jelle rebelled in his heart against this treatment, but he had become, to a considerable extent, accustomed to it. He did break out from time to time; but usually, notwithstanding his chronic irritation, he remained passive, almost obedient. As Yaransk, on his side, had gradually imbibed mistrust, and even contempt, for the other, the two had drifted into a condition of latent unavowed struggle. Still, each pretended to need the other, and they went on simulating friendship and meeting frequently, in Paris, in Moscow (where Yaransk had his home), or in their travels. At that moment Yaransk was in Paris, and had been informed of the coming marriage, and of Madame Jelle's proceedings towards Frieda.

"Dmitri Alexandrovitch," burst out Jules Jelle, entering tempestuously into Yaransk's room at the Hôtel Mirabeau, and flinging himself into an armchair, "my mind is like a fog on the Volga, when you cannot see the banks from the deck of the steamer. We have been in such fogs together in reality; now I am in one by myself, morally."

The Russian lifted his eyebrows slightly, saying, with indifference, "Describe the color and the density of the fog. I listen."

"All that I can recognize clearly in the haze is that I care absolutely nothing about this girl that my father has 'selected' for me."

"Quite natural," observed Yaransk. "That is frequently the case before marriage, and occurs invariably afterwards. Is that all?"

"No, that is not all. If that were all it would be bad enough, but it would not suffice to throw me into this lowering cloud. It is the mixture with something else that thickens the air around me."

"What is the something else?"

"Ah! there is precisely the muddy puddle into which I want you to help me to see clear. That German girl of my aunt's is the mixture."

Yaransk started; threw up his arms; opened his eyes to their full stretch; hesitated; and at last exclaimed, "I suppose I ought to be very serious about this. But upon my soul it is so comical that you must let me laugh."

And he did laugh, immensely—though ragefully.

"When you have done with your hilarity," observed Jules, with vexation, "perhaps you will do what I ask of you, and dissect the mixture."

"Dissect? There is nothing to dissect. You are in love with a German. I must go on laughing, because if I did not laugh I should have to use words that you would not like."

He continued to laugh, abundantly, but with an effort.

"I see nothing ludicrous in what I have been telling you," jerked out Jules Jelle, angrily.

"Then, if it is not absurd, it is infamous," replied the Russian, becoming suddenly grave. "Take your

choice between the two. I prefer to laugh. O principles! O patriotism! O duty to the noble cause! O Alsace-Lorraine! O all the rest of it! You have been in love a hundred and fifty times to my knowledge; but this is the first German."

"I am no more in love than you are. Only . . ."

"There is no only. You *are* in love with the German. I half suspected it from what you let fall two days ago. I watch you too closely to be deceived. You are extremely helpless, and therefore I forgive you a good deal; but I warn you that if you get your heart entangled with a German, I shall take up an attitude that will be unpleasant to you."

Jules Jelle looked furiously at Yaransk, but said nothing. He walked up and down the room, thinking gloomily.

Suddenly he stopped, and let fall the confession, "It may be true. If it is, I will hang myself."

The Russian waited before he answered. "If you and I," he said at last, almost gently, "had not taken up hatred of Germany as the duty and the end of our lives, I should have made no objection to your flirting with a Gretchen. In ordinary cases, diversions of that sort may be taken as they come. But if there be in human nature such a motor as truth,—remark, I beg you, I do not pretend there is; I speak only hypothetically,—you are bound to abstain this time."

"What raving madness are you talking?" exclaimed Jules. "From anybody else such words would be an insult."

"Neither raving nor madness, alas! Nor insult either. You know nothing of your condition. You are not an analyzer, especially of yourself; you are a

blind enthusiast, unballasted, as I am, by healthy doubt and wise suspicion; you never look, or gauge, or measure; you simply trust; you rush, you plunge, you dive and drown, and then, half choked with dirty water, you shriek to me to pull you out. It is not the first time, you know."

"This time," broke in Jules Jelle, loudly, "I have neither rushed, nor plunged, nor dived, nor drowned. I have simply drifted on a current that was not marked on the maps. I have been, unknowingly, quite a fool and half a traitor. I have often been a fool before; but I never was a traitor, and I am not going to begin. I will leave Paris to-night."

"And your marriage with Mademoiselle Trullet?"

"I will break it off," he answered, savagely.

"Will you? Before you do that, I think you are bound to consult your aunt. I leave you to do what you like with your father and the Trullets; but you must permit me to remind you that your aunt has claims upon your politeness."

Jules Jelle became so excited that he ceased to follow any distinct line of idea, and leaped, as if it were quite natural, from his first intention to another that was in absolute opposition to it.

"But, Dmitri Alexandrovitch," he cried, stamping, "all this is crazy folly. After all, I am not an idiot —though I behave like one. Of course I am going to marry Mademoiselle Trullet—at once, as fast as possible. I care utterly nothing about the German. I cannot deny—now that you have pushed the thing under my eyes—that she has got into my head a little; physically, my aunt has made her very—rather—well, full of stimulating incitements. And

her singing shakes me; ah! there she has a power—one of those powers that seize a man. But she has not touched one fibre of my heart. How could she? A German! I hate her now just as I hated her in the beginning; just as I hate every other German; with 'truth,' as you call it. I mean to love Madeleine Trullet. Perhaps I can. I will say nothing to my aunt. There—are you satisfied? You shall see how I will behave."

The Russian listened to all this with a sneering smile. He did not believe one word of it; but he saw, from the submissive attitude of Jules Jelle, that he held him under his control, and therefore did not think it necessary, for the moment, to speak peremptorily. He answered, with mild derision, "Yes, I shall see—what I shall see. I am aware of that. Then, for the moment, you have changed your mind and will not go away to-night?"

"To-night I shall dine with my aunt and ask her to arrange with the Trullets to hurry on my marriage. You had better dine there too."

"Certainly, if I am invited. I am curious to see what sort of a German this can be who has succeeded in leading a Frenchman of your way of thinking to fall in love with her. There may be something in her worth examining. But you, Jules; do you mean to say that you are going, wilfully, to expose that head of yours to more of what you call 'incitements'?"

"What does it matter now? You have cleared away the mist. I see. Dangers that have become visible cease to be dangerous."

"Ah! I was not aware of that. I was under the impression that dangers are always dangerous, even

if they happen to grow visible. However, I am at your side to keep you straight—and keep you straight I will."

"Thank you," rejoined the other, throwing at Yaransk a look of rage. "I am quite capable, without assistance, of keeping myself straight—in such a matter as this, at all events. Your love of domination, your use of what you call your 'will,' need not extend to me."

"My 'will' has duties to discharge, and will discharge them. Those duties, I may observe, are even greater, more numerous, and more obligatory towards you than towards any one else, precisely because we have been friends. In this affair I shall most certainly do my best to help you, whether you like it or not. If I can see the young lady, I may be able to intervene. My 'will' may serve me with her. Ask your aunt to send me permission to come to her to-night."

Madame Jelle had, naturally, known Yaransk ever since he and her nephew had become intimate. She was ignorant of the tension that had grown up between them, but, of her own impression, she mistrusted the Russian, though she listened to his talk with interest, sometimes, indeed, with pleasure. His scepticism provoked her; his cynicism offended her; but she recognized that the habitual brightness of his conversation attracted her. Furthermore, she could not deny that, when he liked, he was a charmer. She told Frieda he was coming, and described him to her as a man of keen aptitudes, of large experience, of much skill in words, and of an undeniable fascination. She went on to say that he had shown daring

bravery during the Turkish war, and had won the Cross of St. George at Plevna; and finished by the information that he possessed a singular power of "will-influence," and that it was in great part from him that she herself had acquired her ideas of the uses and the possibilities of "infusion." She recommended Frieda, laughingly, to take care not to fall a victim to his sway.

When Yaransk was announced, Frieda looked at him with an inquisitive desire to comprehend him. He was the first man she had ever met. At Augsburg, in their narrow acquaintance, there were no men at all; since her arrival in France she had not seen, so far, any man except Jules Jelle, and, in the peculiar circumstances of her relations with him, he stood apart in her eyes; she felt instinctively that he was an enemy; under such conditions he scarcely constituted a man in the sense she attributed to the word. When, therefore, a real man came to dinner, particularly a man of whom such a description had been given to her, her curiosity grew excited, and she promised herself an insight into a type of "soul" that would be new to her.

Her first sight of the Russian showed a thin, middle-sized, soldier-like, fair man of about forty, with rather high cheek-bones and strangely intent gray eyes. But with all her keen desire to reconnoitre him, she found at once that she must wait, for, before he had been a minute in the room, she perceived that *he* was examining *her;* she felt his analyzing survey all over her, and grew timid under it. She had had no opportunity of accustoming herself to the scrutiny of others. And yet that night she was assisted by a

new consciousness of attractiveness, and had imagined it would bestow upon her some strength. For the first time she was in white. Madame Jelle had come into her room to look at her, and had declared delightedly, with all the increase of tender fondness that had grown up in her heart since the scene at La Saigne, that she was at last in her fit rendering; that she looked the combined incarnation of modern grace and ancient legend; that she was an ideal of winning femininess. She had herself the conviction that she was extraordinarily fairy-like in the vaporous white dress that seemed to float around her, and, in her imagination, almost to lift her immaterially into air. But this encouragement did not suffice to shield her from the uncomfortable suspicion that she was being dissected. It was evident to her that Yaransk followed with undeviating attention her every movement. Nervously, with a sensation of diffidence and oppression, she pulled up her gloves, and saw that he glanced instantly at her arms and hands. Nervously, to escape his scrutiny, she turned her head and shoulders, and felt that his eyes followed, studyingly, the altered lines of her position. Nervously, she put out her foot, and knew, in the next second, that his look had fallen on her white satin shoe. The intensity of the investigation became so unbearable to her that, abruptly, impulsively, she hastened away into one of the other rooms and pretended to occupy herself with a bowl of gold-fish. A moment later Jules Jelle came to lead her in to dinner. As they passed before Yaransk, he fixed his eyes upon her with a gaze that made her shrink.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE Frieda had finished her soup she became conscious that she was uncomfortable, that she was not herself, that a *malaise* was creeping over her. At first she could not believe in the reality of the disagreeable sensation she experienced; it had arisen in her so abruptly and so causelessly that she fancied it was an illusion, and expected it to fade away at once. But it persisted and increased. It began even to take the form of a stimulation of her senses; it seemed to her that she saw more visibly, that she heard more audibly, that she felt more acutely, not all together, but each successively, for a few seconds. And yet this augmentation of vitality was accompanied, in contradiction to its own nature, by a loss of will, by a diminution of the sentiment of individuality. She struggled instinctively to regain possession of herself, with a vague perception of pain and even of humiliation at the strange feebleness which had arisen in her. Then she became alarmed at it. What could it mean? Whence did it come?

Suddenly an intuition was in her that Yaransk was the source of it, that he was exercising some incomprehensible influence over her. At this thought she started, with mixed fear and irritation. Madame Jelle had warned her of his power, but her reason and her pride protested angrily against the possibility of such an explanation of her feelings. Yet she could

not drive out the impression that it was the presence of this stranger which, by some mysterious action, was affecting her. Still—it was folly to suppose such a thing; it could not be. What was he to her? How could he, a man she had only seen for the first time ten minutes before, to whom she had not spoken one word, be able to affect her so deeply? It was absurd. Nevertheless, the intuition gained strength, and, after a few moments of disbelief, stood before her as the undeniable truth. It seemed to her not only that Yaransk was the cause of her agitation, but that he had confiscated her liberty. A deep resentment arose in her against him; but, in some incomprehensible manner, there was present with it an invincible attraction towards him. She felt impelled to look at him. Timidly she raised her eyes. She saw that he was talking to Madame Jelle; but, in her emotion, she was incapable of listening. She knew that her power of hearing was increased, and yet for the moment she could not hear. She perceived that the expression of his face was calm and natural; it showed no preoccupation, no sign of any other thought than the one he was at that moment expressing, whatever it might be. All in a moment she heard. He was saying, laughingly, in reply to some observation made to him by Madame Jelle, "Oh, madame, if, as you are kind enough to declare, you find me other and better to-night than you have always known me, it can only be because, after long absence, your touch is swaying me, and is fashioning me unconsciously into a completer harmony with you than I have had the privilege of attaining previously. We change with the persons we meet, and are simply

what their working makes us. Each contact brings its own special influence to bear upon us, and while that influence endures we become its product."

Frieda was startled by these words. They corresponded so extraordinarily with the situation in which she found herself, that she almost suspected they had been addressed direct to her and not to Madame Jelle.

Yet Yaransk took no notice of her, and appeared to be absorbed in his conversation.

"I have often heard you propound those theories before," answered Madame Jelle. "How I wish I could apply them to myself! Mademoiselle de Rothenfels knows well how delighted I should be if 'contact' could 'fashion' me as you pretend."

At these words Yaransk turned his head at last to Frieda. His eyes fell full upon her. She made an immense effort to meet them collectedly, and for a second she fancied she was mistress of her face. But, in her disordered condition of mind, the strain was too much for her; she broke under it; a hot flush passed over her; helplessly, she looked downwards; confusedly, she fanned herself; it seemed to her that every one must notice her disturbance.

Jules Jelle, who had been watching her, did observe it. He asked, with some excitement, "Does Mademoiselle de Rothenfels admit the principle that we can be fashioned by contact?"

With difficulty and hesitation, she answered, "Really—I do not know. Perhaps, under circumstances, there may be fashioning; I cannot tell."

"Of course, of course there is fashioning of some sort," agreed Madame Jelle. "We all know that.

We are all of us always acting on each other, and are producing results around us. The question is, How far can the fashioning extend? I have never believed your assertion, M. Yaransk, that there is no limit to the psychical force we can exercise."

Yaransk answered, with conviction, "The degree of manifestation of results varies necessarily with our natures; but the force in itself is unlimited and unlimitable."

"Do you really mean that in the case of highly endowed organizations there is no boundary at all to the exercise of the force?"

"I do mean it," he asserted positively.

"That is rather frightful," urged Madame Jelle. "That opens the door to the suppression of one's self by somebody else, and to the substitution of that somebody else within us."

"Precisely so," answered Yaransk, looking full at Frieda, who felt that a coldness passed through her.

"I wonder," said Madame Jelle, meditatively, "whether those who are subjected to this force gain or lose by it?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Yaransk, "that depends on 'circumstances,' to use the word of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

Frieda raised her eyes once more, summoned all her strength to her assistance, looked straight at the Russian, and answered slowly, "I affirm that the dispossession of our own will can be a cause of good under no circumstances whatever."

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," insisted Yaransk, "you must take into account the relative values of the will we lose and of the will which replaces it."

"Mademoiselle de Rothenfels protests against the destruction of individuality," broke in Jules Jelle, almost angrily, "and I protest with her. Our individuality is the sole possession which is absolutely our own; as such it cannot be too carefully preserved."

"Not," declared Madame Jelle, "if the communication to us of another individuality can bestow upon us faculties which are not inborn in us? I, for instance, am excessively desirous to absorb certain properties which belong to others."

"Take care, madame," argued Yaransk, with marked earnestness; "there is danger in that process. In seeking to absorb the qualities of others, you may, unknowingly, imbibe their defects as well. None of us are masters of what we give or take by inter-transfer. The faculty of transfer is a reality; but in our present state of knowledge of the subject we are unable to determine exactly what we will bestow, and are altogether incapable to measure what we may unwittingly convey."

"Do you mean to assert," cried Madame Jelle, excitedly, "that if I ask Mademoiselle de Rothenfels to impart to me, by the operation of her will, a capacity which she possesses and I do not, she is unable to direct the character of the transmission she may effect?"

"Not quite that. If she possesses energetic volition, and if you are a good 'subject' (of neither of which preliminary conditions I know anything), she may be able to transmit to you, in some degree at least, the particular gift you want; but neither she nor you would know, at the moment, what else she

might insinuate into you with it. You would only discover that later on."

"You never told me this before," exclaimed Madame Jelle, with astonishment and deep interest. "Is it new since I saw you last?"

"I have learnt it since I was in Paris in the spring; it does not matter how or where. I have learnt too," he went on, with growing energy, "that will-infusion is the vastest of human powers. It is a force so simple in its sources that it is inborn in every child, and yet so resistless in its effects that the proudest man may glory in the splendid domination it bestows. It is a purely natural force, independent of all outside circumstances, producible and exercisable by any of us on all of us, on the single condition that the operator shall be more potent than the operated. I repeat that it is, in varying proportions, in every one of us, though few of us indeed have yet learnt to use it. Its true development is coming. It is the power that will guide the world, as soon as its composition and its applications are clearly understood. The assertion, by mere immensity of will, of irresistible individual superiority, will be the governing instrument of the future; will lead us straight," he cried, excitedly—"the endowed few of us, I mean—to the true survival of the fittest; will restrict mankind to the strong alone, and will thereby raise it to a mightiness of which none have yet dared to dream."

As his voice ceased he looked again at Frieda, with slightly quivering lips, but with strange solidity of gaze.

"Your picture makes me tremble," murmured Madame Jelle, leaning her head on her hand. "In

what degree do you yourself possess this awful power?"

"In a degree which is steadily extending," was the grave reply.

The extraordinary words used by Yaransk, the vehement conviction with which he had pronounced them, and the persistency with which, during the last few moments, he had turned his eyes towards Frieda, affected her in a new direction. She saw, suddenly, not only that he was perfectly aware of the effects he was producing in her, but that it was his fixed purpose to produce them. Why? What could be his object? To do this to her without her previously obtained consent was, distinctly, insolent; but still she felt no desire to complain. A feverish longing spread over her to speak with this man who professed himself so puissant, to ask him what all this meant. And yet, though she felt impelled to talk with him, she was, at the same time, relieved to know that it was impossible to do so. Simultaneously, she both longed and feared to be alone with him. All was contradiction in her. The one sensation that was clear to her was that of subjugation, and with it hovered, despite her anger, a vague rejoicing that he had chosen her to be subdued.

The conversation changed. Interesting as was the subject, it dropped out of sight, as subjects do, and by the time they got into the drawing-room a dozen other topics had been stirred up.

Frieda sat down in a far-off corner, and, under pretext of looking at an illustrated book, made efforts to understand what had happened to her. But, instead of thinking, she had gone off into dreams and

was losing her way in wonderings as to the nature and the joys of "soul influence," when Yaransk took a chair next to her, saying, "I should much like to hear from yourself what you really feel about the question we were discussing at the beginning of dinner. Do you, or do you not, admit that we can guide each other's thoughts and acts?"

A rush of agitation came upon her at finding herself, for the first time, talking alone with a man, with a man who, she was certain, had cast a sorcery upon her, and talking with him, too, on a subject which lent itself to the most intimate personal applications. A mixed thrill of fear and flattered vanity, almost indeed of delight, passed through her; she felt afraid, yet full of gladness at being sought out and asked her thoughts by such a man.

She answered, in extreme emotion, "Yes, I do suppose that, to some extent at least, we can guide each other's thoughts and acts. But I only make that admission instinctively; it is a matter on which I am entirely ignorant. I should be so pleased if you would help me to a clearer view of it."

He looked at her. The force dominated her once more, even more crushingly than before; it seemed to her that not only her will but her very body was enslaved. The feeling lasted only a few seconds; it passed away as it had come; a slight fatigue was all that remained of it. As she rallied again she heard Yaransk ask, "Well, what do you say now? Is your view clearer?"

She stared helplessly at him. He seemed quite calm; there was no particular expression in his face; for any sign of interest he showed, he might have

been explaining simply how to tie a knot or throw a stone. He added, quietly, "Really, you are a remarkably good subject. I fancy I could do what I liked with you. For the moment, however, I content myself with requesting you to say nothing about all this to Madame Jelle, or anybody else."

Frieda felt impelled to bow her head in token of obedience.

As she did so, Jules Jelle, who had been watching suspiciously from a distance, crossed the room and asked, irritatedly, "What are you two doing in that corner? Mademoiselle, will you sing?"

Frieda started.

"Sing?" she echoed, in an unsettled voice, as if she scarcely understood. Then she felt within her an impulse, went straight to the piano, sat down, and sang as she had never sung before. She sang for Yaransk. He listened, looked at her, and told her it was superb. His words threw into her a flush of felicity that was altogether new to her.

When the time came to go away, the two men left the house together. Three yards from the door, Jules Jelle stopped under a lamp, looked hard at Yaransk, and burst out, "Now, if you please, will you tell me what you have been doing to that girl?"

"What I have been doing? Why, what I had to do. I have been taking steps to get her under my control in order to lead her to so behave that you may marry Mademoiselle Trullet with an undisturbed mind. I told you I would help you. I have begun to influence her for that purpose."

"I beg you to leave her alone," exclaimed Jules Jelle, almost violently. "I never liked your processes

of influencing; but, until this evening, they have had no direct concern for me. In this case there is no justification for them. Leave her alone, I say."

"Jules," replied Yaransk, taking the other's arm, and drawing him along the pavement, "I have a duty to discharge towards you. I shall discharge it in my own way, according to the means at my disposal. I mean to pull you clear of that girl. Now that I have seen her, I recognize that she is far too tempting for you to be left to her unresisted action on you."

"Leave her alone, I tell you again. She is a lady, and in a position of trial; she is worthy of all sympathy and respect; she is my aunt's guest and friend; she is a very winning woman; she . . ."

Yaransk put his hand on the other's shoulder, and said, speaking slowly and very gravely, "Do not degrade yourself by such language. She is a German, and that defect effaces all her merits, whatever they be. You and I have accepted a duty in life; we have to discharge it together; neither of us can permit the other to stray from it. Therefore, stand out of my way, and let me deal with this German girl—for your safety."

"What do you mean? I tell you I hate her. I have always hated her. But I will not let you cause pain to her, as you have done this evening."

"And you pretend you are not in love with her?"

"Well, what if I am?" cried Jules Jelle, wildly. "What does it matter if I am in love with her, provided I hate her simultaneously? And I tell you, I do hate her."

"If that is your view of the situation, it is useless

to continue our discussion now. Good-night, my dear fellow. I will see to-morrow how you are, and what is to be done. But remember," he added, inflexibly, "I hold you to your duty. She is so wide open to influence, that by merely looking at her I can make her obey. She will have to do what I tell her—and so will you."

While the two men were disputing in the streets, Frieda was in her room, bewildered and afraid. Madame Jelle had said nothing to her; she had looked at her inquiringly, but had simply wished her good-night, and had allowed her to go upstairs without putting any questions. An echo sounded round her, unceasingly repeating, "I am under a power." She did not know what she meant by "power," but felt, obscurely, that she had encountered it in the very first man whose acquaintance she had made. She thought, almost with awe, of Yaransk; she lost sight of all else. All anger was gone out of her. She had no recollection of details; even the words he had spoken to her had faded from her memory; the force he had exercised over her stood there, alone, before her; she trembled under it, yet exulted in it. She could define nothing.

She slept feverishly, brokenly, and felt, in the morning, that an unmeasurable newness had come into her life.

Madame Jelle said to her, when they met, "I did not worry you with my curiosity before you went to bed; but I hope you will tell me now what was the matter with you last night. Assuredly, there was something."

"Yes, there was something," answered Frieda,

almost automatically; "but I cannot tell you what. I am not free to tell you."

"Not free to tell me? What on earth do you mean? Why are you not free?"

"Because I have promised not to tell you."

Madame Jelle got up, placed herself in front of Frieda, and scanned her with astonishment.

"Are you mad, my child?" she asked.

"Oh no; certainly not. At least, I think not. Though I own that I am not quite mistress of my reason. I have promised. I am powerless to break my word."

Madame Jelle clasped her hands; separated them again; stepped backwards; then came forwards; her eyes fastened all the time on Frieda, with a painful expression of perplexity. It was manifest that she was struggling vainly to comprehend.

"Can you tell me nothing? Nothing?" she inquired at last, appealingly.

Frieda shook her head.

Suddenly a light appeared on Madame Jelle's face. For a second she thought on, still hesitating. Then, with an eager grasp, she seized Frieda's wrist, and, in a tone that implied conviction, cried, "It is Yaransk. He has been operating on you! Why did I not see that last night? Tell me, child; what has he done to you? Tell me, instantly."

"I cannot."

At this refusal, out came the habitual energy and decision of Madame Jelle's character. Without a moment of waiting, she exclaimed, "Ah! you cannot. Then I will make *him* tell me. I will send for him at once, and clear this up."

She ran downstairs and despatched a servant in a cab with a note to Yaransk, begging him to come immediately to the Cours la Reine. When that was done, she shut herself in her own room and thought.

An hour later Yaransk was announced.

"Monsieur," began Madame Jelle, in much agitation, "I have begged you to be good enough to see me without delay, because I have an urgent question to put to you. Did you, last night, exercise your will-influence on Mademoiselle de Rothenfels?"

"Yes, madame, I did."

"What means did you employ?"

"The most ordinary of all means; I looked at her and willed that she should obey me. As she is a perfect subject, she did obey at once."

"But," went on Madame Jelle, with more and more perturbation, "for what purpose did you desire to make her obey you?"

"For the purpose of subjugating her to my mental authority, in order to attain a certain result."

"What result?"

"On that point, madame, I must ask your permission to remain silent."

"Because the result is unavowable?" demanded Madame Jelle, with almost fierce earnestness.

"Indeed, no; so far at least as my share of action goes. But, as it concerns some one else, I have no right to reveal it."

"What is this mystery? I insist on a clear explanation, monsieur. Mademoiselle de Rothenfels informs me that something has happened to her, but that she has promised not to tell me what it is. Now, you confess that you have been influencing her, but refuse

to state why. I noticed last night that she was curiously affected. Is it to you that she has promised not to tell?"

"It is to me."

"Then, monsieur, as all this has occurred in my house, and as I am responsible for the proper protection of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, I call upon you, solemnly, to acquaint me with the object and the nature of your proceedings."

Yaransk smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I am unable to say more," he told her. "The result I am trying to achieve is a worthy one; but I must repeat that it is not for me to indicate it."

Madame Jelle shut her eyes for an instant. A suspicion shot through her.

"Does it—does it—concern Jules?" she asked, tremblingly.

"I entreat you, madame, to be convinced that it is out of my power to inform you."

"I will send instantly for Jules," she cried. "I will go to the bottom of this, no matter where or what the bottom may be. My poor Frieda! In my house! I trust, monsieur, you will be good enough to remain here until my nephew arrives."

"I am entirely at your orders," he replied, with an expression of deep courtesy.

A messenger started off to fetch Jules.

Madame Jelle went up again to Frieda, sat down at her side, and whispered to her, "Dear child, I have come to beg you once more to tell me what has happened."

Frieda shook her head. She answered slowly, "It is impossible. The spell is on me more strongly even

than before. I feel that the force is close to me. I long to tell you; but I cannot. Pray, pray do not see in my enforced silence any sign of indifference to your wishes, or any diminution of my tender affection for you. Materially, I cannot; that is all."

When Jules Jelle reached the house, his aunt met him in the drawing-room, took his hand, and led him quickly, but in silence, to her own room, where, to his astonishment, he saw Yaransk.

"I have sent for you, Jules," she began, "in order to assist me in comprehending something that has happened between M. Yaransk and Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

Jules Jelle turned furiously to Yaransk and shouted, "What has happened?"

"Do you authorize me to tell the whole story to your aunt?" was the quiet reply. "Without your permission I can say nothing."

Jules Jelle turned pale. He saw that the Russian had out-manœuvred him. He stood still, chafing with anger at being caught in such a trap. He turned his eyes, alternately, from his aunt to Yaransk and from Yaransk to his aunt, who was waiting in feverish anxiety for his next word.

"No!" broke violently and loudly from him. "I give you no authority. My secrets are my own."

"Your secrets!" cried his aunt. "Then you, Jules, not M. Yaransk, are the author of this mystery. All this—I see it now—is caused by your shameful hatred of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

Jules gazed at her helplessly. After remaining silent for some seconds, he said, nodding his head slowly, meditatingly, "Yes, oh yes; this is caused,

as you say, by my shameful hatred of her. But—what is it that Yaransk has done to her? Is there anything new since last night?" He added, nervously, "Is she ill?"

"Ill in mind, yes," replied his aunt.

He turned ragingly to the Russian, "I told you last night I would not have it. I told you to leave her alone. What more have you done to her? I insist on knowing."

Yaransk bit his lip, but made no other sign.

Madame Jelle, intensely alarmed, laid her hand on her nephew's arm, and said in a broken voice, "To you, Jules, I have a right to appeal; from you I have a right to expect a reply. I call upon you, with all the authority of my old attachment to you, to inform me of the meaning of this."

A rolling wave of lucid thought rushed suddenly through Jules Jelle's brain; suddenly he saw the truth of his own condition; suddenly he knew what he had not known until that instant. The secret broke from him. Wildly he called out, "I love her; I love her passionately. Yaransk saw it before I did, and has been trying, in his way, to turn her from me. There—now you know all."

"Great God!" cried Madame Jelle, joining her hands and staggering to a chair.

In stupefaction, she said feebly, "My poor Jules, how could this have come about? It cannot be true. Tell me it is not true. You hated her!"

"True? Yes—it is quite true," he answered, in a very low voice.

"But—you are engaged to be married to Madeleine Trullet! And—you hated Frieda!"

No answer came. Jules Jelle sat down and covered his face with his hands.

Yaransk crossed the room to him and asked him, almost gently, "Now that you have confessed your secret to your aunt, do you authorize me to tell her the details of what has occurred?"

The other murmured, "I suppose she must be told. Yes, tell her."

When Madame Jelle had listened to a report of the conversation of the morning before between the Russian and her nephew, and when Yaransk had asserted to her that in seeking to dominate Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, his sole object had been to lead her to avoid Jules Jelle, her answer was, "Whatever be your motive, monsieur, you had no right to influence my guest. Furthermore, the motive was ridiculous. How can you, knowing Jules as you do, suppose that he is serious in this pretence of loving? The whole thing is raving madness. He hates all Germans, and this one in particular. Therefore, there was no reason whatever for worrying the poor girl as you have done. It was inexcusable cruelty. I call upon you to release her at once from the bondage to which you have reduced her."

"In the hope, madame, that you are right in your judgment, and that there will be no necessity for me to renew my influence over her, I will release her from it. But I ought to warn you that if, as I suspect, the young lady is a rarely impressionable subject, the effect will not disappear instantly. Some days may pass before she feels herself completely free again. I had better see her; I can liberate her more completely if I have her here."

"I will send for her. Go into the drawing-room, Jules."

Frieda was asked to come down. When she entered the room, she walked straight to Yaransk and stood still before him.

"Mademoiselle," he told her, "I withdraw from you the whole influence I cast upon you last night; I release you completely; and I beg you to forgive me for having presumed to try my power upon you."

Frieda trembled somewhat, turned to Madame Jelle, and asked, "What shall I do?"

"Go back to your room. I will be with you as soon as possible, to try to calm you."

Madame Jelle waited till the door was closed, and sent Yaransk away with the words—

"I thank you for having come to me. Of course, Jules's mad fancy will not endure. Be gentle with him. And, if you please, play no more experiments of this kind in my house."

He bowed, and left.

The aunt went to join the nephew, and found him walking gloomily up and down the room. She attacked him instantly. "This is the most enormous of all the follies you have committed, Jules; the most thoughtless, ill-judged, and ridiculous. It is impossible, fantastically impossible, that you can be in love with Frieda. The idea is utterly grotesque."

"I do love her," he answered, sullenly. "I hated her—that was the truth yesterday. I love her—that is the truth to-day. Why it is, I am unable to explain. It is—that is all. There is nothing left for me but to go away."

"But, do you forget that you are engaged to be married to Madeleine Trullet?"

"No, I remember it."

"Then press on the marriage. Cease to come here. Drive this idiotic caprice out of your head, and be a good husband to your wife."

He muttered, "I will not marry. I cannot endure a wife. I will go and tell my father so."

His aunt stared at him. "You will not marry Madeleine Trullet?" she asked. "You will tell your father so? Decidedly, you are more mad to-day than you have ever been before."

CHAPTER VIII.

MAD or not, Jules Jelle was in earnest when he informed his aunt that he would not marry Mademoiselle Trullet. The idea of doing so filled him, suddenly, with horror; his decision to break off the engagement, though instantaneous, was final. He went straight home, determined to inform his father, at once, that he refused to go any further in the matter. He did not trouble himself to reflect; he yielded, as if it were quite simple and natural to do so, to the impulse of the moment, gave no thought to consequences, and had but one idea—that it was impossible to marry one woman while loving another.

On reaching the Avenue Kléber he found that his father was out. He was obliged to wait five hours for his return, and had therefore ample time to consider his position. But he did not consider at all. He had no thought in him except the desire to break with the Trullets. He felt neither doubt nor hesitation; he longed to act, that was all.

When at last Jacques Jelle came in, Jules jerked out to him, "I have something to tell you—something important."

His father looked at him eagerly and exclaimed, "I trust, my son, that, in consideration of your approaching marriage and of the new duties it will impose upon you, you have decided, at last, to enter political life. Is it that?"

"No, it is not that. It is that I cannot marry Mademoiselle Trullet."

"Not marry. . . ?" the father stammered. "What? What do you mean? What is the matter with you?"

"The matter is, simply, that I will not marry Mademoiselle Trullet."

"Not marry. . . ? You *shall* marry her!"

"Again, I tell you that I refuse."

Jacques Jelle shivered with rage. Furiously he screamed, "Have I come to such a shame as this? I? Why—I have pledged my word! I shall be disgraced!"

"There are pledges that cannot be fulfilled; that is all. But I am, really, very sorry to cause you annoyance."

"And the reason, monsieur?" roared the other, maddened with rage. "What are your motives for thus dirtying the unspotted escutcheon of my commercial honor? Until this moment every engagement accepted by a Jelle has been loyally carried through."

"The reasons are simple enough. I find that I do not love Mademoiselle Trullet, and that I do love some one else."

"And because of a fancy of yours about loving or not loving, we are to fail to carry out a contract? My son, you will kill me."

Jules remained silent.

"And—may I ask—who is the some one else that you are pleased to love?" inquired the father, with bitter scorn.

"The some one else is Mademoiselle de Rothenfels."

At this, Jacques Jelle almost leaped into the air.

"What?" he shrieked. "What? Why, you hated her! What? You have the audacity to assert that you love that woman? A German! *You?* Do you know that you are adding political opprobrium to commercial degradation? Do you know that you will destroy my position as a statesman? And—she is a beggar! Shame on you, monsieur! You dare to avow to me that you love an enemy of our land? a woman that you abhorred? who does not possess a centime? Why—the very clothes on her back are paid for by your aunt! Oh, how I am fallen!"

He dropped into a chair, held his head in his hands, and shook himself in distress.

"Yes," replied Jules Jelle, in a feeble voice. "Yes, I used to believe in rules and principles. I perceive now that, like most of the encouragements we seek in life, they are deceptions. I love Mademoiselle de Rothenfels; therefore I cannot marry Mademoiselle Trullet."

His father rose, stood before him, fixed his eyes upon him, and stuttered out, "And I—Jules?"

"I know it is very sad," was the reply; "but there it is. I have told you the whole truth. I cannot change it."

"But—the money?" almost yelled the other. "The money I have so carefully sought out for you? The money that was to fortify your political position, and augment your power of leading men? You cast aside the millions of Mademoiselle Panot and Mademoiselle Trullet as if they were to be found every day in the street!"

"I can only repeat that I am deeply grieved to have to cause you pain."

"Cause me pain? You assassinate me! You break every hope I had formed for your future—for the future of the Jelles. I had provided for you a wife who was worthy to be employed to fortify our status and to assist in perpetuating our name, and you—you, monsieur—refuse to respect my signature, your father's signature; for an engagement to marry, especially with so large a *dot*, may justly be compared to a signature or an acceptance at two months' date."

Jules groaned.

His father looked at him; at first with real unaffected distress; then, by degrees, with a swelling assumption of pompously noble suffering.

"Leave me, monsieur," he proclaimed. "Leave me. I need to consult my inmost intellect. I need to determine the course it becomes me to pursue in this crisis of my career. Leave me to my paternal anguish, to my outraged dignity, and to my profound reflections."

Jules Jelle went straight to Yaransk.

"As you have thought fit," he began, "to thrust yourself into what is happening to me now, it may interest you to learn that I have decided to break off my engagement with Mademoiselle Trullet. I have no right to make her my wife while my head is troubled by another woman. I have just informed my father of my decision."

Yaransk looked at him with half-shut eyes, but made no reply.

"I can guess what you think of me," went on the other.

"I assure you I do not think at all. I simply sit

still and wait for events. If it should become necessary to act, I shall act."

"Act about what?"

"To prevent you from marrying Mademoiselle de Rothenfels," answered the Russian, carelessly, lighting a cigarette as he spoke.

Jules Jelle jumped to his feet, his fists clinched, "Marry her? I?"

"Yes, you. You want to marry her. But you shall not."

"Ha, ha! it is my turn to laugh to-day. Marry her! The joke is delicious, Dmitri Alexandrovitch. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Very delicious indeed."

"Do you mean to say that you suppose me capable of marrying a German?"

"Most certainly. A man in love is capable of anything. Besides, there is no denying that she is very tempting."

Jules Jelle, with all his efforts to appear amused, was, in reality, intensely angered. The dictatorial contemptuous tone assumed by Yaransk exasperated him. He longed to quarrel with him, then and there, to tell him he would bear no more from him, and to turn his back upon him. But the provocation of all this, keenly as he felt it, was not yet quite sufficient, in his eyes, to justify a final rupture. He restrained himself, muttered, "I am flattered by the confidence you have in me," and went away.

He wandered, half stupefied, in the Champs Élysées, and was vaguely conscious that he had offended everybody, and had no friend left with whom he could take refuge. This last accusation

—that he was capable of asking Frieda to be his wife—gave him the measure of Yaransk's opinion of him. He, *he*, marry a German! Of course he was in love with a German; there was no denying that; but marriage with a German! No, no, he had not fallen to that. That he should yearn to see Frieda was natural, but that was all. He tried to trace the process by which his hatred for her had become converted into love; but lost his way at once, and could perceive no causes but a sound of glorious song, a dazzling skin, and dreamy eyes.

"And yet," he murmured to himself, as he stalked on, "that is not enough to have put into me what I feel; there must be in her something that I have not measured; at my age, with my experience of women, I have ceased to be at the mercy of mere physical attractions. To have conquered me like this, she must possess a power, for she has beaten me utterly. And she has beaten me without knowing anything about it; she has made a slave of me, and is ignorant of her work. What a mess I am in with the Trullets! They must be amazed at my disappearance. I have not been to them for two days. I am behaving infamously to them. And Yaransk thinks I would marry a German! Ha, ha! Fool that he is!"

After a pause, he continued, "Would my aunt consent to see me? She is the only person to whom I can speak out; she is the only person who would understand me. Perhaps, even, she can explain to me how it is that Mademoiselle de Rothenfels has reduced me to this condition—how it is that, having hated her, I adore her."

He looked around him and perceived that, automatically, instinctively, he had reached the Cours la Reine, and was close to Madame Jelle's house. He glanced up at the windows, hesitated, crossed the embankment to the river, leaned against the parapet, and looked at the dark water. After a few moments he turned back again, walked straight to the door, and rang the bell.

"Is my aunt at dinner?" he asked the concierge.

"I suppose so, Monsieur Jules," was the reply.

"Then I will write three words to her. Give me a sheet of paper."

He wrote, "I am at the door. Will you see me?"

Five minutes afterwards a servant asked him to come in.

He found Madame Jelle in the drawing-room, alone. She looked at him interrogatively, but said nothing.

"My aunt," he exclaimed, "you told me not to come back. But I am unable to stay away. Can you forgive me?"

"Frankly, no."

"How is—how is Mademoiselle de Rothenfels?"

"Ill; at least nervous and weary."

"Where is she?" he went on, looking round him.

"In her boudoir. I have dined there with her, and have come down because you asked to see me. What do you want?"

"If I knew what I want I should be less miserable," murmured Jules Jelle, letting his arms fall, and gazing dejectedly at the carpet. After a moment he added, "I have told my father I will not marry Mademoiselle Trullet."

"You have told your father you will not marry

Mademoiselle Trullet?" echoed Madame Jelle, incredulously. "You meant it, then?"

"Yes, I meant it. He is very angry."

"You break off your marriage because you pretend to be in love with Frieda?"

As she spoke these words, a fantastic idea passed through her brain.

"Jules!" she cried, "in the name of everything that is impossible, do you want to marry Frieda?"

"You—too?" he cried. "Yaransk has just put the same question to me. What matchless folly! I —marry a German? No, my aunt."

She folded her arms and remarked, pensively, "Jules, you are contemptible."

"I dare say," he muttered. "Yes, I dare say. Of course, I must look contemptible. I know the whole thing is disgraceful. I, who imagined I had principles!—principles! But I do love her."

"I think you had better go. I do not want to leave her alone."

An expression of helpless indecision passed over Jules Jelle's face; there was no sign of struggle; there was nothing but hesitation. Out of the vacillation came the question, put in a dreamy voice, "You have just asked me if I want to marry her. Do you believe that—if I could decide to do it—she would take me for her husband?"

"Why, she is convinced you hate her! You have done everything in your power to prove to her that you do hate her. I asked you because, under the circumstances, the question came to my lips of its own accord. But how could any one think seriously of such an impossibility?"

"Would you explain it to her?" he inquired, gloomily.

"How could I explain what I do not understand myself? No; I will have nothing to do with it. Your conduct distresses me intensely; it is both childish and dishonest. You have got yourself into the muddle; get out of it as you can. My sole duty is to Frieda. I tell you once more that I do not believe you are in love with her. Even if you are, you will change your mind in a week, and rush after somebody else. That is your way."

"Can I see her?"

"See her?—see her? Decidedly you are insane. If you behave like this, I will take her to Italy tomorrow."

"I wish you would—I could join you there."

"Go away—go; and carry with you the conviction that, in all this, my one thought is to shield Frieda from pain of any sort whatever, and that you shall never approach her again unless I am certain that she will not suffer by meeting you. Adieu!"

She left him.

Jules Jelle looked after her for a moment, and then, wearily, wandered out of the house. He found himself in his own room without knowing how he reached it, forgot that he had not dined, and sat down sadly before the fire.

"I am somewhat calmer," said Frieda, with a pale smile, when Madame Jelle rejoined her. "The strange effect M. Yaransk produced in me is diminishing slightly. He had no right to influence me; it was very wrong of him. But what could have been his object? Can you tell me? I want to know."

"No, dear child," was the answer. "I will ask him when I see him."

"I should like to see him myself," said Frieda, very simply.

"My idea is that you had better not see him any more. The leverage he set to work upon you has done you no good. As you say, it was very wrong of him. I do not trust him, and fear that, consciously or unconsciously, he might begin again. If you could influence me as he has influenced you, it would be for our common advantage, for we are two women with the same objects and needs, and are bound together by tender affection. But the action of a man on a woman—especially of that man on such a woman as you—could scarcely serve any desirable purpose."

"And yet," said Frieda, turning her head, "there are moments when I almost feel that I should like him to go on. Such a will as his is magnificent to behold! It is a privilege," she added, excitedly, "to encounter a nature of such power."

"A very doubtful privilege, Frieda; there is more danger than advantage in it."

The girl looked at her as if to answer. But she checked herself, and asked, "Has M. Jules gone away?"

"Yes. He is gone."

"Do you know, I fancy he hates me less."

Madame Jelle started slightly. "I should be glad if I could think so," she replied. "His dislike for you has always pained me. But he is so intoxicated about politics that it is impossible to hold him."

"Has M. Yaransk any politics?" asked Frieda.

Madame Jelle fixed her eyes upon her; a faint suspicion leaped up in her heart; her eyebrows lifted as she answered, "Yes. He abhors Germany even more violently than Jules does."

"I can scarcely realize that. I should be sorry to believe that. He did not convey that impression to me last night. But if that is true I shall be still more curious to discover what his motive was in operating on me. Dear Madame Jelle, will you let me see him again?"

This time the suspicion turned almost into a certainty. Madame Jelle whispered frightenedly to herself, "Why, this girl that Jules says he loves seems to be almost in love herself with Yaransk."

The thought produced a strange effect upon her. Irritated as she was against her nephew for the disorderly folly with which he had acted, she felt suddenly angry with Frieda too for preferring somebody else. If she was to have a liking for any one she met in that house, of course it ought to be for Jules. It seemed to her that, if Frieda liked Yaransk better, she showed thereby ingratitude towards herself. But this impression did not last; it disappeared as quickly as it came; she told herself that it was exaggerated and even absurd to suppose that Frieda could be, already, really drawn to Yaransk. Besides, although Frieda had just expressed the faint idea that Jules hated her less, she was entirely ignorant of the change of feeling that had come over him towards her, and had, therefore, no motive of sympathy for him. Furthermore, Madame Jelle knew quite enough of the operation of will-influence to be perfectly aware that, when it has been exerted

strongly, its effects continue to exist, for a time, in a gradually weakening form. Yaransk himself had warned her to that effect. Consequently, on thinking over Frieda's language about the Russian, she became inclined to attribute it to the after-action of the domination of the night before, and not to any real commencement of affection on her part. It was out of the question that she could have any love for a man she had seen only for three hours.

As she thought on, she drifted, almost without transition, to the notion that, after all, it might perhaps be a very good solution if Jules did make Frieda his wife. The marriage of the two persons she loved best would cement the tie between them and herself; they would live with her; they would all be happy together; in such a situation she would find the joys of family life, which she had never known; a new satisfaction would open out before her. Instead of exciting her imagination, Frieda would content her heart; the latter would be a more real and more durable gladness than the former. Yes; that was Frieda's true mission in her house. Decidedly, if it could be managed, it would be an admirable arrangement. Why had she not perceived that at first?

Again she looked at Frieda, who, gazing at the fire, was lying backwards, dreaming, with a faint smile upon her lips.

"Are you thinking of Yaransk?" asked Madame Jelle, pushed to the question by a force she could not resist.

The girl turned her head and answered gently, as if it were a matter of course, "Yes, I am thinking of

him. I cannot think of anything else. I told you at La Saigne that I hoped to reach fresh perceptivities through contact with some nature more powerful than my own. Have I found that nature?"

Madame Jelle winced a little.

"What is the use of such wild fancies?" she asked, with a certain positiveness of manner. "I can perfectly understand that he has spread over you a portion of his 'self,' for that always happens in such cases; but as for imagining that he may be your destined complement, that is nonsense. No possible good could come of yielding to his influence; much harm, indeed, might result from it. You would do well, I assure you, to thrust it out."

"I cannot thrust it out. I recognize that I am not mistress of my thoughts. I have got back again to dreaming; but it is a new sort of dreaming; I might almost describe it as dreaming under orders. He has been my master for a while. Is he my master still? Will he be my master always?"

"Go to sleep over it," answered Madame Jelle, vexed in her spirit, but trying to appear amused. "Perhaps your view will be clearer to-morrow. Anyhow, I cannot help you. I see that Yaransk has got hold of your susceptibilities, and I am jealous of him for it. Oh, if you could get hold of mine! Good-night."

Next morning a letter came from M. Trullet to Jacques Jelle, mentioning, with surprise, that Jules Jelle had allowed three days to pass without visiting his *fiancée*, and inquiring whether he was ill.

Jacques Jelle sent immediately for his son, and sternly, without speaking, held out the letter to him.

Jules read it and said, "Do you desire to inform M. Trullet yourself that I cannot marry his daughter? Or, is it your wish that I should tell him?"

"I have reflected," replied the father, with the intensest dignity he could assume. "I have passed the weary hours of the night in meditation. I have decided. The honor of our race requires that I, the head of the house, in person, should stand forward in the breach which you have dug, amid the destruction which your hands have wrought. I will inform M. Trullet that a Jelle declines to carry out a bargain he has made, and that dishonor has fallen on my name."

"One question more," said Jules, "would you like me to remain with you or to go abroad? I desire to do the best I can to lessen the pain I cause you."

Jacques Jelle rose and walked up and down the room.

"At any other moment of the history of France and of our family," he declared, "I should answer, Leave me; leave me to bear, in solitude, this shame; leave me to mourn over your measureless folly. But circumstances force me to listen to another voice than that of our broken pledge, to turn my musings to another theme. The Ministry will be out to-day—that is certain. In the new Cabinet a portfolio must be, will be offered to me; at least, it is impossible to conceive—I mean that imagination refuses to admit—in fact, I cannot allow, that I shall not be summoned to sit in the Councils of the Nation. Therefore, consequently—that is to say, in consequence—I must place bandages on my wounded heart and hold my head high, as if I were not tortured. It is the

penalty of high position to have to suffer with a smile. You are my son. Notwithstanding all that you have done, you continue to be my son; your conduct, awful as it is, does not deprive you of the position, the noble position, of the heir of the Jelles. Whence results—that is to say, from these precedents it ensues—that you must stand at my side and share with me, subordinately of course, the responsibilities, the—the—the exalted privileges, of office. My heart, the heart of a father, must find satisfaction somewhere; if you will not marry, you shall be, at all events, my secretary when I am Minister. That is the sole condition on which we can preserve the relations of father and son."

Jules said, submissively, "I will obey; I wish to soothe you if I can."

"Then wait here. I will go at once to Trullet."

An hour afterwards he returned, rather pale, with the information that M. Trullet declared he would have a duel with each of them, and that Mademoiselle Trullet had fainted. He did not seem, however, to be as much upset as he was before he went. He said, even, with an unconcern that might have been partly real, "After all, my son, abominable as is your conduct, we cannot allow others to assert that we have behaved badly. Besides, a duel often helps the reputation of a statesman, and, at the moment of the formation of the new Ministry, might be very useful to me. I will reflect; I will reflect. It may be that if Trullet does not challenge me—and, between ourselves, I do not think he will—I shall act adroitly in sending him my seconds to demand satisfaction for his complaints against us. I should be quite safe in

doing so, for I am sure he would refuse. A statesman must think of every detail that can serve him."

Jules remarked, quietly, "I trust the young lady will be in no way damaged by my conduct to her. I have treated her disgracefully. It would be lamentable if she had to suffer."

"Certainly, my son, certainly. You have behaved disgracefully, especially in rejecting the money. But now that you have done it, it is wise to consider what we can make out of it. I disapprove you fundamentally; I suffer cruelly; I suffer as only natures highly strung can suffer; but as your mind is made up—I presume it is made up? the mind of a Jelle ought always to be made up—I yield. That is the present state of things: let us think, therefore, of the present; let us take matters as they are, and make the best of them. That maxim was applied every day by Jelle Twins, and led them to fortune."

On leaving his father, Jules went to the Cours la Reine.

"I am very sorry—very much ashamed of myself about Mademoiselle Trullet," he told his aunt. "It seems the poor girl fainted. I am horribly distressed at the pain I give her; but it would have been worse still if I had married her."

"Tell me the details."

He repeated what he had heard from his father.

"I wish you had gone yourself," observed Madame Jelle, when he had finished. "What a fool your father is! And you mean to stop here and console him by sitting at a green table to receive visitors and answer notes for him, when he is hatched into a Minister?"

"It appears so."

"Poor Jules! Your situation is bad enough without that addition."

"I could not refuse."

"Really? I imagined you were capable of refusing anything your father asked of you. That has been your habit hitherto."

"Can I see Mademoiselle de Rothenfels?"

"No, a thousand times no! Unless—unless the wild idea I threw out yesterday—the idea of your marrying her—were adopted by us. Will you, or will you not, marry her if she will accept you?"

"To say that I would marry her would be to contradict every sentiment of my past life, to disgrace myself in my own eyes and those of all my friends, and to break forever with Yaransk. And yet, my aunt, I do believe that I am almost ready to contradict myself, to accept the disgrace, and to see no more of Yaransk, in order to obtain her. If I do make up my mind to that, shall you approve me? Of course my father would not consent, at first; but if you said yes, he would end by giving way."

"I do not say yes at all. All I know is that I change my mind every five minutes. There have been moments, since this strange notion came into my head, when it has seemed to me that such a marriage would make me very happy; and others when I think that it is a frantic folly. Besides, would she accept? Remember that you have done everything in your power to make her detest you."

"Yes, I know that. But, if I do decide, will you let me try?"

"I cannot answer now. If I do permit you to at-

tempt to win her, it will be later on. How you have thrown away your opportunities!"

"How could I tell that I should end by loving her?"

"How could she tell it either?"

"If you will not let me see her, how can I show her that I am changed?"

"I repeat that I can give you no answer now. I am not going to be precipitate, like you. I shall turn over all the elements of the situation before I come to a decision. Frieda is the first person for me to consider; you come second. Besides, the Trullet matter is not over yet; I must wait to see how that turns. What a tangle! How you have bungled! It would have been so easy for you to fall in love with her at once, instead of hating her savagely, as you did."

"The wisest thing I could do would be to go away and see if I can cure myself. But I have promised my father to stop with him."

"That is an excuse you are manufacturing for yourself. If you wanted to go, you would go, and no father would stop you. You are singularly changed, Jules. What has become of your violence? I do not recognize you in this miserable condition, and, upon my word, I think I liked you better in the other state—bad as it was."

He looked at his aunt as if he scarcely understood her.

She added, her thoughts travelling suddenly in another direction, "I wish you would not worry me in this way. You frighten me for my dinner to-morrow; as it is the first of the winter I want it to be a particular success, so as to throw lustre over its fol-

lowers. I would shut you out if it were possible to do so; but your absence would only make people talk, especially after this Trullet affair. You must come, but you must behave yourself, and not go near Frieda. Now, I have done with you. I am going to take her out for some air."

An hour later, in one of the shady riding-paths of the Bois, Madame Jelle and Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, who had got out of the carriage for a stroll, heard a horse coming up behind them, and stood aside to let it pass. As it neared them its rider pulled up from his canter, and called out—

"Oh, madame; oh, mademoiselle, how glad I am to meet you! Fate is indeed gracious to me. May I walk with you?"

As he spoke, he dismounted.

It was Yaransk.

Frieda had started, and turned red, on hearing the voice. Madame Jelle looked deeply vexed. Yaransk went on—

"Permit me, mademoiselle, to repeat the expression of my earnest hope that you have forgiven me."

Frieda felt confused, yet curiously pleased. She answered, "Yes, monsieur, I have forgiven you."

"What he did was abominable," remarked Madame Jelle, walking slowly on. "I am not sure that he ought to be absolved at all."

"Pardon for the sins of men is the most frequently used prerogative of women," urged Yaransk, with a smile.

"Pardon depends, even among women, on the nature of the sin to be pardoned. Yours was a grave one. Furthermore, you committed it at the very

moment when you were declaring that, in exercising will-power, the operator cannot measure the damage he may produce. According to your own showing, therefore, Mademoiselle de Rothenfels is exposed to all sorts of unrevealed consequences from what you did to her."

"Permit me to indulge the hope, madame, that no wickedness has flowed out of me. I assure you I am conscious of no diminution in the quantity of it which dwells habitually within me."

"That protestation is in entire contradiction with your own theory, that 'none of us are masters of what we give or take.' Decidedly, M. Yaransk, I have no faith in you."

"Are you, mademoiselle, as unbelieving as Madame Jelle?" he asked, turning to Frieda.

Awkwardly, hesitatingly, she answered, "I have already said that I forgive you. Is not that a sufficient symptom of my confidence? But—why did you do it?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, I saw in you an admirable subject. The love of science tempted me to try you."

"The love of science tempted you to try me!" repeated Frieda slowly, stopping in her walk—"the love of science!"

Then out broke the old temper; in a passionate burst, she cried, "You tried an experiment on me for the love of science? That was your motive, monsieur? That?—that? You dared to do that—to *me?*"

Standing to her full height, her head thrown back, her eyes flashing with anger, she made a step towards

Yaransk, stood before him, and waited imperiously for his answer.

But she found her master.

Their eyes met in a full gaze. She felt the power, shrank before it, trembled, and turning to Madame Jelle, whispered brokenly, "Take me home at once."

During the drive back neither of them spoke. On reaching the house, Madame Jelle followed Frieda to her room, and said, "In your interest, my child—I may indeed say, for your health—I must put an end to this. Yaransk will never ask you to be his wife."

Frieda, her cheeks scarlet, leaped to her feet.

"His wife?" she cried; "I—his wife?"

Instantly she turned pale again, murmuring, "Why do you say that? Such a thought has not appeared to me in my dreams. His wife? Oh no, no. He will never ask me to be his wife. Besides—you heard him—he said he did it for the love of science. It was not for me; it was for science. I—the I—counted for nothing."

She sank back into her seat.

"Poor Frieda! My poor Frieda! You are travelling on a wrong road. Your future cannot lie in the path of that man. Turn your eyes elsewhere."

"I have no elsewhere," muttered Frieda.

"How do you know that?"

Languidly Frieda looked towards Madame Jelle. She saw in her face an expression that puzzled her. She sat up in her chair, and, after an instant, asked, "What do you mean? What does it all mean?"

"I mean what I say. Turn your eyes elsewhere."

Frieda made an effort to understand; but she was incapable of following out a thought. The influence

of Yaransk was upon her with force enough to cripple her liberty of reason.

Madame Jelle wished to say no more for the moment. She leaned over Frieda and kissed her, repeating, "Yes; you had better look elsewhere," and left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

JACQUES JELLE came home that evening from the Chamber in extreme excitement.

"The Ministry is out!" he cried, the moment he saw his son. "At last, my opportunity has come."

He added, with an assumption of indifference, "Has any communication arrived from Trullet?"

"I believe not," answered Jules.

"On the whole, it is perhaps better to avoid a duel. It would place me before France as a gladiator; and, after all, that is not the right reputation for a Minister. Under any other circumstances, of course, I should act—that is to say, I should decide—I mean—you know exactly what I mean. Therefore I will not send my seconds to Trullet."

"I quite agree with you," observed the son.

"Yes; I will sit in my tent, like Achilles. It is singular how I resemble the great characters of antiquity. The other day it was Cæsar . . ."

"Cæsar's wife, if I remember right."

"Cæsar, or Cæsar's wife, what does it matter? The other day it was Cæsar; to-day it is Achilles. By the way, my son, is the latter comparison correct? Why did Achilles sit in his tent? Was it not for some reason about a duel—like myself? I have been told, but have forgotten."

"It was after his quarrel with Agamemnon."

"Agamemnon? Are you sure? Really, Jules, I cannot compare Trullet to Agamemnon. No, no, I cannot do that; it would be absurd. Trullet, Agamemnon!"

He laughed scornfully.

"There, again, I agree with you," said Jules, very gravely. He added, "How soon do you suppose this question of the Ministry will be decided?"

"To-morrow, perhaps, or the day after. I shall await the result in calm, as the ancients would have done. The ancients always waited calmly—at least so I have heard. Modern diplomatists also wait calmly—that is to say, they seem to do so. There is that tie between them and the heroes of antiquity. Therefore my two models concur. If I did not imitate those models I should be unable to endure what you oblige me to endure."

"I wish I could find the same force of soul in the contemplation of a model," sighed Jules.

"Force of soul!" replied his father. "That is a vigor you will obtain only from the contact of politics. I had none when I was making screws. Politics have rendered me superior to the weaknesses of life; even, as you see, to the follies of my own son. If it were not for politics and for the mental vigor which statesmanship and the contemplation of noble examples have bestowed upon me, I could never have forgiven you for flinging away the Trullet *dot*. In discharging the functions of my secretary you will acquire force of soul. Still, though I pardon you, because you are the sole remaining Jelle, I am utterly unable to comprehend that you have refused the money. I have always affirmed that 'Money is

power.' I believe the observation has already been made by others; but if it had never been made, I should have made it."

"You have enough for both of us," put in Jules, trying feebly to soothe his father.

"Enough? There is no such quantity. The word is in ridiculous contradiction to the whole tendencies of human nature. There is but one word which correctly expresses the idea of 'enough;' that word is 'more.' Screws and politics have combined to teach me that. My son, a Jelle can never have too much money; that is why you must marry wealth; if it is not to be Trullet's money, it must be somebody else's. I will make another selection for you."

"I do not answer you, because I will not cause you more pain."

"Nonsense! This folly about 'loving,' as you call it, will pass away, and then we will begin again."

Jules spent the evening alone, feverish with worry and indecision. At first he sat before the fire, watching, half unconsciously, the smoke-puffs as they whiffed, at moments, out of the burning logs, and asking himself by what operative processes he had been led from his intense hatred of all Germans, to the equally intense love which had grown up in him for a German. The only answer he could invent was the pitiably unsatisfactory one that conviction, like everything else, is temporary and transient; that the principles of to-day are rarely those of yesterday, and will probably not be those of to-morrow; that, as Yaransk had asserted that night at dinner, "we change with the people we meet, and are simply what their working makes us;" that we are the ever-

varying products of the promptings of each moment, and of the influences of each *rencontre;* that nothing is solid in us, that nothing rests on a basis; that the direction of our lives depends on the accidents of meetings, still more on the temptations that fall across our road. But, as he thought all this, a revulsion of disgust passed through him; bitterly, ragefully, he asked himself whether such ideas as those could possibly be his; whether he was still the same Jules Jelle, or whether he had become some one else; above all, whether it was really true that he had grown indifferent to the disgrace of abandoning, for the love of a woman, the patriotic dogma which had mainly formed his character and temper, the duty which had tied him to his country and had guided his life.

As the hours passed, his head grew less and less clear; he changed his seat continually; leaned his head on his hands in every possible position; stood up; sat down again. His thoughts were indistinct; among them, one only was fairly recognizable; that one thought was that his willingness to take a German for his wife depended on the willingness of the German to accept him as her husband. In his absorption he finished by sitting still. By degrees he became motionless, his eyes fixed before him. For hours he remained torpid. The night waned; he went mechanically to bed; but whether he slept or not, he was unaware.

In the morning he was still in the same condition, half stupefied. For a long time he wandered up and down his room. Suddenly, violently, his nature woke again.

"I will do it," he cried aloud; "I will do it, no matter what it costs. I cannot hold myself. I have no power of reason or resistance. I know it is a burning shame; but I will do it, all the same. She *shall* be my wife. I will go at once and tell her so."

He hurried downstairs and almost ran to the Cours la Reine.

It happened, when he reached the house, that his aunt and Frieda had just got back into the drawing-room after giving orders for the grouping of flowers about the house for that night's dinner.

Madame Jelle exclaimed, almost in fear, as she saw him come in, "Frieda, Frieda, go away! You must not stop!"

But Jules Jelle walked straight to Frieda, telling her, "No, mademoiselle, you must not go away. It is you that I have come to see. I entreat you to listen to what I have to say to you."

Frieda turned her eyes in bewilderment to each of them alternately. Madame Jelle sprang before her, as if to defend her, insisting, "You shall not speak, Jules. I order you to leave the house instantly."

"Not speak, now that I am face to face with her?" he answered wildly. "Not tell her what I have come to say? Indeed I will."

"Come out with me," cried Madame Jelle, seizing Frieda's arm and dragging her to the door.

But Jules was in front of it, and barred the road.

"Mademoiselle," he faltered out, as the two women stood before him, holding each other, "I have come to ask you to be my wife."

Frieda looked at him, shrank away, turned to Madame Jelle, looked back again at Jules, and mur-

mured, "Oh, madame, what is the matter with him? Is he ill? What does it mean?"

"It means," went on Jules Jelle, with more solidity of tone—"it means that I love you. Oh, do not start back! Of course you do not believe me. Why should you? But give me time. I implore you to give me time to prove that my hatred for you has turned to love, and that I cannot live without you."

Frieda drew farther and farther from him, her eyes fixed on him in profound alarm. She clasped her hands together, became very pale, and whispered to Madame Jelle, "What does he mean? He frightens me. Is he mad?"

Still Madame Jelle said nothing. She held Frieda tight, but would not speak.

"Frieda, Frieda, believe me!" cried Jules; "it is the truth. I cannot explain it to you; but it is true. I love you, and I entreat you to be my wife."

"But, monsieur," replied Frieda, in stupefaction, "you hate me; you hate Germany; you are engaged to be married to Mademoiselle Trullet. Madame! madame!" she exclaimed, turning again to Madame Jelle, "tell me, I entreat you, what does he mean? I am so afraid of him."

At last Madame Jelle decided to say—"I suppose, my dear child, that he means what he says; that he is in love with you, and that he wants to marry you."

A deep prolonged "Oh!" burst from Frieda. Then she laid her head on Madame Jelle's shoulder, and muttered, "How horrible!"

Until that instant all Madame Jelle's feelings and instincts had been concentrated in the effort to protect Frieda against Jules; but the words "How horrible!"

turned her abruptly the other way. The impression she had already felt that it would be wrong of Frieda not to accept her nephew's love rushed back into her head, and this manifestation of repugnance, almost indeed of disgust, offended her excessively. With all her affection for Frieda, she felt wounded and affronted by her attitude; she drew her arms away from her, and answered, in a tone of unconcealed annoyance, "Horrible? No, Frieda. It may be silly of a man to talk of love; but it is never horrible."

"What shall I do? what shall I do? Let me go!" cried Frieda, in excessive agitation.

"Sit down with me," said Madame Jelle, authoritatively. "Now that the thing is begun, it is better to have it out. What have you to say, Jules?"

"To say?" he answered, almost in a shout. "I have to say that my whole nature is torn from its hinges; that all my past is emptiness and falsehood; that love stamps out principles, duty, and conscience; that every force and every vigor in me has turned to love of her; that I love her with such intensity that my reason reels." With sudden gentleness he murmured to Frieda, "Save me!"

Frieda had listened to this outburst with growing terror. She could no longer doubt. Jules Jelle meant what he said, that was evident. Impetuously she protested—"Such a thing cannot be. It is impossible. It is horrible. It is in contradiction to everything that has passed between us. No, no, no! Let me go—let me go!"

She turned once more to Madame Jelle and added, "I ought to have gone back to Augsburg. All this is frightful. Why does he love me? I do not want

his love. I do not love him. No, I do not want his love."

She hid her face in her hands and sobbed hysterically.

The tears brought about another revulsion in Madame Jelle. Her sympathies for Frieda rose uppermost once more. She took her again in her arms and kissed her. But she did not speak. Deeply as she felt for Frieda, she desired, more even than she then knew, that Jules should succeed in the wild effort he was making. As the instants passed, the wish to solve the painful difficulty in which they all three found themselves by a marriage between Jules and Frieda grew rapidly stronger. She forgot the objections and the difficulties that stood in the way; she saw only that it would be a solution which would satisfy her heart.

"Can you not allow him to attempt to win your love?" she whispered to the trembling girl at her side.

Frieda started, stood up, stared at Madame Jelle, and exclaimed, as if in horror, "You, too? Oh, what is to become of me?"

"But, Frieda," insisted Madame Jelle, "there is really no ground at all for such distress as you are showing. If my nephew loves you, what is there in that to mortify or offend you? Love is a symptom of good-will—at least it is usually so understood. Why, then, should it shock you to be told that you are loved? As for myself, what could be more satisfying to me than to see you and my nephew become my children together?"

Frieda's eyes wandered unsteadily about the room; nervously she clutched her fingers.

"But—but," she cried, pouring out her words in disorder and haste, "such a thing is madness. How can a German girl become the wife of a Frenchman? How can he expect me to believe him? I do not love him. No, no, no, I say! I tell you it cannot be. Do let me go away."

Suddenly she hurried to the door, so fast that neither of them could stop her, and was gone.

"Well, Jules, your first attempt has not been very successful," observed Madame Jelle as soon as Frieda had disappeared. "I did not mean to aid you; on the contrary, I was most vexed with you for daring to come at all, especially to-day, for you may upset Frieda for the evening. But in the course of the discussion, I turned to your side and supported you. Now you must leave her to me. You will have to meet her to-night, for neither of you can be absent from my table without provoking comment; but keep away from her, I beg of you. She will start off to Germany if you worry her. What trouble you do give me!"

"Yes, yes, I am intolerable; I know that; intolerable to everybody. But if you will really help me, we may be able to act upon her after a time."

"We must see; we must see. I wish her to be your wife. I acknowledge that. But at this moment I must think of her—not you. After this abominable scene—how I do hate scenes!—she must be altogether ill. I must go to her at once. Adieu! Behave properly to-night."

Madame Jelle found Frieda looking absently out of the window in her room. She seemed not to hear the door open and did not turn. It was not till

Madame Jelle was at her side and put her arm round her that she showed any consciousness of her presence.

"You told me to look elsewhere," she said very quietly. "Am I to understand, from what has just occurred, that 'elsewhere' meant M. Jules Jelle?"

"Yes, my dear child, it did mean my nephew."

"Then, in telling me, also, that M. Yaransk would never ask me to be his wife, you were simply clearing the way for M. Jules Jelle?"

"Why should I not have tried to clear the way? What more natural desire could I have than to bring about a marriage between you and Jules, when once I knew that Jules loved you?"

"You appear to imply thereby that his wish alone had influence on you, and that mine counted for nothing."

"I imply nothing of the sort. Your wishes count with me for even more than his."

"But I have no wish whatever to be his wife," exclaimed Frieda, vehemently.

"May I ask if you have any wish to be the wife of M. Yaransk?" inquired Madame Jelle, with a certain sharpness.

"I have told you already that no such fancy is in my head."

"Then, if you do not prefer Yaransk," went on Madame Jelle, remorselessly, "why will you not take Jules?"

"Because I will not marry without love," answered Frieda, peremptorily.

"Love comes after marriage more easily than before."

"That is a French idea," answered Frieda, opening and shutting her hands, with disgust. "No German was ever of that opinion."

She looked out of the window again, as if she wished to put an end to the conversation.

Madame Jelle waited a moment and went on, "But, my dear child, do let me say to you that the position is becoming absurd, as well as excessively disagreeable. Here is Jules—a very excellent fellow, notwithstanding his faults—who tells you that he cannot live without you; it may seem incredible, but I really imagine it is true. And there is Yaransk, who is not a good man at all, and who, thus far, has shown no sign of interest in you—except to distress you. How can you hesitate between them? Do think it over; see if, down at the bottom of your heart, there is not a dream that Jules could realize. It would delight me beyond words to see you become his wife."

"Impossible, impossible. It is impossible," asserted Frieda, her fingers tapping the window-pane almost hard enough to break it.

"Oh, nothing is impossible. Anything may come about. You may change your mind altogether and fall in love with him."

Frieda did not answer; she seemed to shrink from Madame Jelle, and to thrust herself more and more tightly against the window, as if to escape through it.

Presently, she turned round, making, evidently, a resolute effort to be calm, and said, slowly, "I love you so much; I owe you so much; my debt to you is so great; my heart is so full of gratitude to you, that, indeed, I would do anything—almost anything—to

give you pleasure. But this? This? Think yourself; think, as you ask me to think; ask yourself if, after what has occurred between M. Jules and me, it is possible that I can love him."

"What has occurred between you has not prevented him from loving you."

"I cannot imitate him."

"Love grows up, sometimes, in strangely dry places. Let us wait and see if it will sprout in you. I will say no more about it now. All I ask of you is to go on seeing Jules as if nothing had happened—particularly to-night."

"But, must I really dine?" asked Frieda. "I am so unwell, so nervous, so unfit to meet people."

"What would be said, my dear child, if you did not appear? To what motive would your absence be attributed? If you knew the world you would comprehend that every one would put it down to a consciousness of your unfitness. Of course you must dine. Besides, I want you to be seen and to be admired."

"Ah!" sighed Frieda, "what a wretched comedy you ask me to play!"

She felt that it would be ungrateful and ungracious to declare that, in addition to the absence of all love in her for Jules Jelle, there was, within her, another overpowering reason why her marriage with him was impossible. Never could a Rothenfels stoop to wed a Jelle. Low as she had fallen, she had not come down to that. Was Madame Jelle so blind that she could not see it? Surely it was evident enough. She could love Madame Jelle; but not marry her nephew.

Twenty persons came to dinner. Some were Roy-

alists; some were Bonapartists; some (most of them, perhaps) had no political convictions whatever; but all were people of "society;" that is to say, there were no official Republicans among them. The Duchess d'Austerlitz, wife of the grandson of Napoleon's Marshal, was taken in by old Count d'Armagnac, who had been page to Charles X. As she settled herself in her chair, she lifted her fan before her face and whispered behind it to her neighbor, "Have you looked at the German girl?"

"I have looked very much. Why?"

"Because people are growling about her and are saying that Madame Jelle has no right to force her on us in this fashion. She is, therefore, a subject of curiosity."

"I fancy Madame Jelle will let them growl. I know her very little—indeed I have only just made her acquaintance; but she seems to me to have a will of her own."

"Very much a will of her own; more, I assure you, than most others. She has told me all about this girl; Rothenfels is a good name in Prussia; and she does look undeniably like a lady."

"I know it is an old name; and the girl herself is delightful, absolutely delightful."

"She is bashful, and she is not quite accustomed to her clothes; but she has astonishing distinction, and a type—I never saw such a type. She attracts me. I am half disposed already to take her up, if it be only to give a lesson to the grumblers."

"It is as refreshing to the mind as green is to the eye to hear you express such liberal opinions, Duchess. I heartily agree with them. She cannot be

regarded as a 'companion.' I am sure she merits your sympathy. I wonder if she can talk."

Thereon, the old gentleman put up his eyeglass and scrutinized Frieda critically for a long minute. When he had finished, he observed, "Charming! charming! I feel half tempted to make a little court to her myself, in spite of my old age."

"As the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it, I advise you to try. I will watch you and applaud. But, I fancy you have a rival. Have you noticed how that nephew of the house is glaring at her?"

"Who? What nephew? Is there a nephew of the house? It is the first time I have dined here, and I am ignorant of the landmarks."

"That brown man down there. He is the nephew. He has never taken his eyes off her since he sat down. He is in love with her; that is evident."

"Is he a son of Jelle the Deputy?"

"Of course he is."

"If he is as great a fool as his father, he can scarcely be a desirable husband for the young lady."

"Not a desirable husband? Why, he will have a gigantic fortune, and she has not a centime. But I did not mean that he would marry her. How could he? A German!"

"Ah yes!" answered the old gentleman, with a sigh; "it is very painful to be obliged to hate them all. When I was young some of us took German wives; an aunt of mine was a Donaueschingen, and my eldest brother was going to be married to a Rheinstein; only she died. I think I lost my heart

to two or three of them myself. In those days it was quite natural."

"But no Frenchman can make love to a German now, still less marry one."

"I fail to agree with the first part of your proposition, Duchess. I shall certainly approach this one presently; discreetly, very discreetly, as becomes my age; but I shall do it. Her skin is astonishing; the foam round Aphrodite, the swan of Lohengrin, were not whiter."

"Bravo, Count, bravo!" cried the Duchess, clapping her hands, with a mocking laugh. "I rejoice to see that your imagination is still excitable. Add Paros marble, the Vestal's robe, the . . ."

"Thank you, thank you, I need no more comparisons. In fact comparisons are incapable of describing such a skin as that. The hair too!"

"Decidedly, you are like the nephew, you are in love with her," was the amused rejoinder.

The Duchess thought an instant, and added, "*Apropos*, some one told me to-day that this nephew has just broken off a marriage without any apparent motive, and that his friends are blaming him. I see the motive. What a wonderful instinct I have!"

She leaned forward and looked steadily at Jules Jelle.

"Yes," she went on, "yes; that is it. There is no doubt about it."

The old Count smiled and said, "I fear I cannot put myself in competition with the nephew. I have outgrown the capacity of love-making, though I was very handy at it once. Why, to my eternal shame, I have never even been in love with you, Duchess."

"Not even a little bit, here and there?" she answered banteringly. "I have always counted you as one of my adorers. But I am ready to be immediately sacrificed to the German, out of pure curiosity to see how you will manage it."

"I will satisfy your curiosity," replied the old man, gayly.

An hour later, in the drawing-room, Madame Jelle brought up M. d'Armagnac to Frieda and introduced him.

"Mademoiselle," he said, sitting down at her side, "you have thrown a glamour over me from afar. The moment I saw you I wished to talk with you—to tell you that you awaken in me memories of long ago, of the bright days when French and Germans were good friends. I shall be very grateful if you will make, for a few moments, an alliance between your youth and my old age, and bring back those days to me while we chat together."

Frieda smiled. She had made a determined effort to shake off the saddening impressions under which she had been passing: the dinner had excited her, had helped her to forget, had distracted her attention from herself and her own worries. The delicate words of M. d'Armagnac touched her; it was with cordiality and sympathy that she answered—"I am much flattered, monsieur, by the alliance you propose to me. Let us sign it at once. Only—to what end is it to be directed?"

"It is, of course, to be offensive and defensive—that is to say, we are to keep everybody else at a distance while it lasts, and have our talk between ourselves alone."

"Why do you say 'while it lasts'? Why should it not endure?" laughed Frieda. "My 'glamour,' as you call it, must be of feeble force if it has done no more than inspire you with a desire for a merely temporary coalition between us."

"At my age, mademoiselle, it would be dangerous to propose durable treaties. Time might not be left to me to fulfil the obligations I should accept. If you will deign to listen to my poor eloquence for twenty minutes, that will be all I shall venture to ask to-night."

"I will listen, monsieur, for twenty minutes, and for as much longer as you like," said Frieda brightly, leaning backwards and opening her fan.

But before M. d'Armagnac could begin his speech, Madame Jelle came up again with the Duchess d'Austerlitz, who exclaimed, two yards off, "Mademoiselle, forgive me for declaring that I have been looking at you with delight throughout the dinner, and that I have quite lost my heart to you."

Frieda rose precipitately. She blushed, felt very awkward, and recognized, with vexation, that though she had become able to make the acquaintance of a man without too much timidity, it was still rather a serious matter to her to be introduced to a woman.

"It is barbarous to interrupt you, my dear Count," went on the Duchess, turning to M. d'Armagnac; "but as I saw that you were proceeding to draw regular lines of investment round Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, and that you evidently intended to keep her exclusively to yourself for the rest of the evening, I determined to break in upon her before you had

time to encompass her with impregnable fortifications."

M. d'Armagnac answered, reproachfully, "It is unfair of you to force me to raise a siege that I had scarcely commenced."

"Do you know," the Duchess went on to Frieda, as she sat down, "he is already so much impressed by you that he calls you 'the swan of Lohengrin'?"

"The swan of Lohengrin?" echoed Frieda, making an effort to recover from her shyness, and to appear amused. "Why, madame, that particular swan could never bear resemblance to any woman. A man was hidden in it."

"Well, why do you complain of that?" retorted Madame d'Austerlitz. "Is not a man hidden in every woman's heart? The allegory is all the more exact, for that very reason."

"Certainly, certainly," insisted M. d'Armagnac. "I forgot all about Godfrey of Brabant when I ventured to liken Mademoiselle de Rothenfels to the snowy bird that drew the gondola of the nameless knight; but now that the young gentleman comes back to my memory, I agree entirely with the Duchess. My simile was even more generally correct than I supposed."

Frieda forced herself to laugh, and answered, "Indeed no; its application to me, at all events, is entirely inexact. I confess that in my dreams I have sometimes imagined myself a swan; but let me assure you that no man's image is hidden in my heart."

At that moment Jules Jelle happened to pass the group, and heard the last words that Frieda had pronounced.

He stopped short, looked hard at her with an expression of pain, made a movement as if to speak, but checked himself, and was going on again when the Duchess, who had followed his action with curious eyes, called out to him, "You seem, M. Jelle, to disapprove Mademoiselle de Rothenfels's assertion that no man's image is hidden in her heart."

The blood rushed violently into Frieda's face. Jules Jelle turned pale, bit his lip with anger, and stared wonderingly at the Duchess; but neither of them spoke.

In a mocking tone she went on, "Well, we will not pursue the question further; there are mysteries which must be respected. But, mademoiselle, I persist in maintaining that that swan—that particular swan—was an excellent emblem for you."

M. d'Armagnac thought all this cruel; so he interposed to protect Frieda.

"Mademoiselle de Rothenfels was on the point of concluding a compact with me, Madame la Duchesse, when you came up just now. Your arrival disturbed the signature. Let us go on with our covenant, mademoiselle; we were to be great friends, you remember, for twenty minutes."

Frieda felt grateful to the old man for his intervention, and said to him with as much calm as she could command, but in a disordered way, "Certainly; for twenty minutes. But I objected to the shortness of the period."

"Commence with what you can get, mademoiselle," put in the Duchess. "Everything must have a beginning—even the hiding away of images in the heart."

"Yes," said Jules Jelle, speaking at last, as if in spite of himself; "but it is a bad beginning if the image cannot afterwards be effaced."

"And the joys of inconstancy, M. Jelle?" exclaimed the Duchess; "the varied delights of changing your mind? Do you mean to assert that they have no existence for you? If so, your experience of life must be abominably melancholy. Have you loved once only, for evermore? Pray tell me all about the sensation, for I never met anybody else who felt it."

"And my conversation with Mademoiselle de Rothenfels," insisted M. d'Armagnac, determined to change the subject, and to relieve Frieda from the embarrassment into which the talk of Madame d'Austerlitz had evidently plunged her. "I claim the right of the first comer. After all, Duchess, you are only an interloper. Mademoiselle, if we are not to be allowed to negotiate here in peace, let us go away to a more favorable spot. Will you do me the honor to take my arm and to show me the pictures in the other room?"

Frieda sprang up eagerly, and the two went off together.

"As I am abandoned in this heartless manner," bewailed the Duchess to Jules Jelle, throwing herself back in her low chair and stretching out her crossed feet before her, "it becomes your duty, monsieur, to sit down and comfort me. Describe to me the nature of that eternal fidelity to which you alluded just now —or, if you prefer another subject, tell me if it is true that your father is to take office in the new Ministry; the evening papers say so."

"Really I am unable to inform you; I do not know," stuttered Jules, whose head was in a whirl, and who longed to get away and be alone.

"Oh, I only put that question in order to enable you to evade the other. It does not interest me in the least. What a very striking person Mademoiselle de Rothenfels is!"

"Yes, madame, yes; at least—I have heard people say so."

"And your own opinion, M. Jelle? What is it?"

"Oh, madame, I think—of course—that is to say—she is certainly very . . ."

He stopped short.

"Which means, translated into comprehensible French, that in your heart, at all events, an image is hidden away. You show the image to everybody who looks at you."

The Duchess laughed maliciously, and rapidly opened and shut her fan half a dozen times.

Then she added, "Nothing amuses me so much as to spy out love secrets."

"Madame, I assure you," protested Jules; "I declare . . ."

"Assure nothing and declare nothing. I ask no questions. I simply acquaint you with the result of my observations this evening. I repeat that she is a marvellously attractive person—I think so, even if you do not,—only, she is German."

Jules became exasperated. It was with the utmost difficulty that he restrained his rage. Happily for him, while he was asking himself vainly what answer he could make to this merciless *persiflage*, his aunt came up. He seized the opportunity; in a moment

he was gone; in two minutes he had left the house.

"I am so much struck by Mademoiselle de Rothenfels," said the Duchess to Madame Jelle, "that I want you to be so very kind as to bring her to me to-morrow. I hope you can come at five. I should like to make acquaintance with her. I am not afraid of inviting a German."

CHAPTER X.

As Jules Jelle entered the hall of his father's house, a servant said to him, "His Excellency is waiting in his study for M. Jules."

He did not notice the phrase. His head was so full of painful thoughts that he paid no attention to surroundings, and went mechanically upstairs. When he reached the first floor another man threw open the door of the library, announcing, in a shout that tried to be obsequious, "Monsieur Jules, Excellency."

Before the fire, his hands behind him, his head thrown back as if it could never get far enough or high enough, his chest boomed out, his lips expressing the uttermost intensity of assumption and conceit, his legs so far apart that they seemed to imply that the body had become too overpoweringly important to be carried by them, stood Jacques Jelle.

He made a perceptible effort, on the entrance of his son, to throw still more tremendousness into his head, his chest, his lips, and his legs, and slowly, sententiously, as the door closed, let fall the words, "My son, in your father you behold a Minister!"

Jules stood still and looked at him. After a moment he asked, carelessly, "Is that why they call you Excellency? I thought there were no Excellencies under the Republic."

Anger and disappointment spread over Jacques Jelle's face.

"Are those," he asked, bitterly, "the first words you think fit to use when you learn that I have achieved my destiny? I counted on the respectful admiration of my only child—and my child laughs!"

"Indeed I do not laugh; not at all; not in the least. Only I did not understand the Excellency. I assure you I am very glad you are a Minister, because I suppose it pleases you."

"It was I, monsieur, who instructed my household to address me by the title of Excellency; the title which belongs—implicitly and inherently, I may say; though in contradiction, it is true, with the stern and pure simplicity and equality of Republicanism—to the exalted citizens who, because they are recognized as the superiors of other citizens, cease, on assuming power, to be simple citizens."

"Shall I call you Excellency, also?" inquired Jules.

"Before the public I expect you certainly to speak of me as His Excellency. But I authorize you when we are in privacy—for even a Minister must have moments of privacy—to continue to say father to me."

"How did it happen?" asked the son, making an effort to seem interested. "What department have you got?"

"Two hours ago," replied the father, with augmenting grandeur, "I received from the new Prime Minister the written offer of the Portfolio of Docks and Steamboats. Of course I should have preferred Foreign Affairs as being more in harmony with my peculiar faculties; but I can wait, Jules, I can wait. My real opportunity will come; a man of true genius can show his value in any post, however comparatively unimportant; I take this as it is, knowing that it

will lead to more. But to resume my history. I got into my carriage (which I had kept in constant readiness all day), and drove to the Élysée, where I was anxiously expected. I saw the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister; I informed them officially of my acceptance of office, and acquainted them with the outline of my views of policy. I came home again, and was about to send for you when you arrived. To-morrow morning," he added, with plethoric pompousness, "I shall be present at the first Council of the new Cabinet. I shall spend the night in studying the details of my functions in the various encyclopædias in my library, and in twenty-four hours I shall be ready to introduce radical modifications into the entire organization of the docks and steamboats of France. Meanwhile, as the first act of my Ministry, I appoint you my secretary."

He cast his eyes up into the air, raised his hands as if in prayer, and ejaculated, "Lamented twin, do you see me?"

"Well, as I am your secretary," asked Jules, submissively, "can I do anything for you?"

"You can draft your own appointment for me to sign. That is all for the moment."

"How is it to be done? I know nothing about things of that sort. Have you got a model?"

"Well—no, Jules," answered the father, hesitatingly, and with some vexation. "I possess no model. I confess, between ourselves, that I am still unacquainted with the forms of office. We will wait until the morning. But consider yourself appointed."

"Can I help in getting up your subjects for you?"

"No, my son and secretary, you cannot help. The

study of the subjects which will henceforth constitute my objects—there is a certain resonance in that phrase, I will employ it in my first Ministerial speech, when I develop before the Chamber my programme, whatever it may be, for the entire reconstitution of the docks and steamboats of our beloved country—that study, I say, must be performed by myself alone. Besides, you are aware—or, if you are not, I am—that it is in no way indispensable to be minutely informed in order to introduce radical modifications. The first, the natural, the obligatory duty of every new Minister is to undo everything that his predecessors have done. To that task I feel fully equal, even without any study. A man who has made a vast fortune in screws ought to be able to unscrew. Ha, ha!"

He laughed admiringly.

"By the way, my son," he went on, "though it is of course superfluous to speak of it, let it be understood that your folly about that young German person is finally at an end. In my position such things not only cannot be, but must never have been. I refer again to the wife of Cæsar."

Jules looked at the ground for an instant and then muttered, sullenly, "I asked her to be my wife, and she refused."

"What!" cried his father, startled and incredulous. "You dare tell me that you asked her to be your wife? The wife of my son? The wife of the son of a Minister? And she refused? She refused my son? Nonsense. The thing is impossible. You are raving. You did not ask her; and, especially, she did not refuse."

"It is very painful for me to talk of it, but I have

the habit of speaking out to you. I repeat that I asked, and that she refused."

"The only conceivable explanation of her refusal is that, when she refused, she did not know you were the son of a Minister. She will change her mind directly she hears of my appointment. Never will I receive her as my daughter—a German and a beggar! I order you to see her no more. The secretary owes obedience to the Minister, even if the son refuses to listen to the father. But at this moment I decline conversation on the subject. Write to your aunt and acquaint her with the fact"—here his voice rose and his whole body swelled—"that the name she has the honor of bearing (by marriage) is inscribed on the page of history, and that her brother-in-law has taken the place that belongs to him in the phalanx of Statesmen, by the side of Lycurgus, Richelieu, Metternich, and Bismarck; no, not Bismarck—he is a German, therefore he cannot stand at my side. Now leave me to my labors, and exclude, forever, the young German person from your thoughts—just as I exclude Bismarck from mine."

He raised his hand to his head, as if it were so heavy to carry that it needed propping up.

Jules passed the following day in attendance on his father. The occupation drove out of him the small share of patience he had endeavored to lay up, and, before the afternoon was over, he was meditating fiercely whether he would not employ his usual remedy for difficulties, take a mail-train for a port, and embark next day on a steamer bound somewhere on the other side of the earth.

At five o'clock Madame Jelle and Frieda paid their promised visit to the Duchess d'Austerlitz. They had spent an uncomfortable morning together, and both were out of spirits and nervous. On emerging from the palm-trees grouped round the entrance of the drawing-rooms, they found four or five women and two men chatting with the Duchess. The visitors stared inquisitively, though coldly, at Frieda, but exhibited no clear signs of ill-will, for the demonstrative kindness with which the Duchess greeted her, showed them that if they wanted to be hostile, it would be wise to reserve their attacks for another occasion. Before they had time to manifest their dispositions, whatever they might be, the door opened again and the *maître d'hôtel* announced, successively, with a few seconds of interval, "Monsieur le Comte d'Armagnac; Monsieur Yaransk."

Frieda started and shrank back as the latter name reached her. Madame Jelle glanced anxiously at her, but, as she was on the other side of the room, was unable to interfere in any way.

M. d'Armagnac discovered Frieda at once, though she was in a dark corner, and, as soon as he had done shaking hands round the circle, sat down next to her. But Yaransk did not perceive her. He saw Madame Jelle, however, and after talking for an instant with the Duchess, came to her, and told her he was glad to meet her. He continued, "I hope you have forgiven me. I cannot doubt that you have recognized by this time that I acted for the best, and that I do not deserve the blame you attributed to me at first."

"I do not think you acted for the best at all. I

think you were wrong in your object and wrong in your form of action."

"Wrong in my object?" echoed Yaransk, with astonishment. "Surely you do not mean to tell me that I was wrong in desiring to interpose a barrier between Mademoiselle de Rothenfels and your nephew?"

"That is precisely what I do mean to tell you."

Yaransk looked at her as if he did not believe his ears.

"But surely, surely, I am not to understand that you approve his mad love for her?"

"Understand what you like. Anyhow, please interfere no more. You must permit me to say that the affair does not concern you."

"Not concern me, madame, that Jules Jelle is in love with a German? Pray—who should it concern, if it is not me?"

"It concerns Jules, his father, myself, and the German he loves. No one else has anything to do with it."

Yaransk glared at her with amazement and fury. He was beginning to understand. But he was so astounded that he could not speak.

Madame Jelle went on, imprudently, "It is the intention of Jules to make her his wife, if she will accept him; and I heartily approve the intention."

"I thank you for the information, madame," replied the other, with concentrated rage. "I will make use of it."

"And how will you make use of it, I should like to know?"

"That, madame, is my affair. I do not, like you, give notice of my intentions."

"If your intention is to operate again on Frieda, so as to turn her against Jules, I forbid you absolutely to attempt it. She has suffered too much from you as it is."

Yaransk turned his half-closed lids on Madame Jelle; he made no answer; but a singular expression of mixed decision and contempt played round the corners of his mouth.

Suddenly, a thought struck him; he opened wide his eyes and sought with them eagerly about the room.

"Surely," he exclaimed, after an instant, "Mademoiselle de Rothenfels is there, behind that screen! You did not tell me she was with you."

"Why should I tell you she is with me?" was the irritated answer.

"Well, in reality, there is no reason why you should; especially as I can find it out for myself. Only . . ."

"Only, what?"

"I will not finish the sentence."

"Because a threat was hidden in it, I suppose."

"Oh, madame, I never threaten. I do what I have to do without talking of it beforehand."

"And I, monsieur, do just the contrary. I talk of what I mean to do. I mean to prevent you from speaking to Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. I will not permit you to go near her."

The Russian smiled pityingly.

"It is useless to continue our conversation," concluded Madame Jelle, with undisguised bitterness,

moving her chair towards the person on her other side. At the same instant Madame d'Austerlitz crossed the room to them, exclaiming from a distance, as was her way, "M. Yaransk, I was going to introduce you to Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, because, though you detest Germans, as a rule, she is such an exception that I was certain you would like her. She tells me, however, that she knows you already; so the presentation is unnecessary. Go to her."

At this unexpected interference with her plans, Madame Jelle turned round sharply, exclaiming, "Please leave M. Yaransk to me; I want him."

"In that case Mademoiselle de Rothenfels had better come and sit with you, especially as she has to consult you. I have been telling her how much I wish to hear her sing, and have suggested that you shall dine here to-morrow, so that I may listen to her afterwards. She awaits your decision on the question."

The Duchess glanced at Yaransk, adding, "You had better join us."

"To-morrow I am engaged," answered Madame Jelle, precipitately.

"Then come to breakfast instead, or at three o'clock, or at any other hour you like. Only let it be to-morrow."

Madame Jelle sought vainly for an excuse.

The Duchess did not wait for her reply, but went backwards a few steps, calling to Frieda, "Mademoiselle, we want you here. Please come."

This attracted attention, and, as Frieda rose, all the eyes in the room fixed themselves analytically on her.

She saw them, and, for an instant, felt afraid; but a force entered into her and supported her, and it was with upright head, shoulders thrown back, steady sight, and resolute slowness, that she crossed the wide room. Yaransk had willed that she should come to him, and had cast his strength upon her. The current between them was established, and he was able, as he had foretold to her the first time he saw her, to do what he liked with her."

On reaching the other side, Frieda bowed to Yaransk, who looked at her but did not speak.

"Well, at what hour is it to be?" insisted Madame d'Austerlitz. "Choose the time that suits you best, but pray do not postpone it, for my nature is not patient, and I have made up my mind to listen to your voice to-morrow."

"Will you decide, madame?" said Frieda to Madame Jelle.

It had become impossible for the latter to escape; so, making an effort to seem pleased, she yielded.

"At three o'clock, if you like."

"Very well, at three," replied the Duchess. "I will ask no one, excepting M. Yaransk here present, and M. d'Armagnac, who regards himself already an old friend of the 'white swan,' and who, therefore, would be wounded if he were left out."

Yaransk bowed his acceptance and looked again at Frieda.

She turned her eyes upon him, and, in the flash that passed through them, his keen gaze read delight.

At the same moment Madame d'Austerlitz remarked, "I am sure, mademoiselle, you will not refuse to permit M. Yaransk to join your audience."

This random phrase, which was intended simply as an idle compliment to Frieda, brought the blood leaping to her cheeks. The Duchess (who noticed everything) saw the sudden redness, and wondered to herself, "What does that mean?"

A minute afterwards M. d'Armagnac came across, and the chat grew active.

Yaransk took no part in it. He stood still, raging at the revelation that Madame Jelle had just made to him. They meant to make this girl the wife of Jules, he thought to himself. That was their plan! But they counted without *him*. Were they fools enough to suppose that he—he—the leader of Jules Jelle, the watcher over his weaknesses, would stand by silently and permit him to commit such an infamy? How little they knew him if they thought that! His power over Frieda had been established with extraordinary success; he had but to keep it up; she could not disobey him; he would force her to refuse. He laughed, sardonically, at the certainty of his victory. Ah, they presumed to count without *him!* Ah, they told him to his face that this marriage was to be brought about! He would show them their error. Not one shade of doubt was in his head as to the righteousness of his attitude. The struggle between himself and Jules Jelle, latent for so long a time, had suddenly assumed a character of active combat; the hour had come to prove that he was and meant to remain the master. And yet—and yet—he hesitated for an instant. Unwilling pity for Frieda was rising in him; he could not trace its origin or growth; but neither could he deny that he felt it, and that he was sorry to be obliged to make a

victim of her. Her person influenced him in spite of himself; he professed to be insensible to the action of women; and yet this one did, to some extent at least, provoke an interest in him. She was unlike others; she was essentially herself, apart; the shape of her intelligence, like that of her elegance, was entirely her own, not that of all the world. Besides, she had proved herself to be his humble vassal, his unresisting bondwoman; and, with all the hardness of his nature, it was impossible for him not to be somewhat flattered by his easy subjugation of her. But still, true as all this might be, he could not permit himself to spare her; it was for her that Jules Jelle had turned traitor to their common cause; it was through her alone that his apostasy could be checked; it was by her own refusal that the marriage must be prevented; never should it be carried out while he was there to force her to say no. He cast aside his momentary hesitation; despite his rising sympathy for Frieda, he determined to go on using her as his tool. If Madame Jelle had not been so idiotically foolish as to warn him of her designs, if she had not openly defied him, he would have remained in ignorance, and would not have been directly called upon to interfere again; but to be told, to his face, that, in spite of him, she meant to make Frieda the wife of Jules, that was too much. The marriage should be stopped, by the action of his own will-power.

When he had thought this over, he joined the group; he willed his utmost; he talked his best; never had he been more brilliant, more singularly charming. Frieda listened, without speaking, enthralled; and when the time came to go, and her

eyes met his in a last look, she felt, down in her heart, that at last an image was appearing there.

After dinner, Madame Jelle and Frieda were sitting before the fire. For some time they had been silent. Madame Jelle, nervous, preoccupied, exasperated, had difficulty in restraining her inclination to have a scene with Frieda, and to prove to her that, for every reason, it was her duty to become the wife of Jules. Frieda, her thoughts far away, her eyes fixed emptily on the embers, her arms drooping, seemed to have lost consciousness of time and place, and to be off the earth, in dream-land. A smile was on her lips, as if the vision pleased her. The character of the two women came out with striking evidence in their attitudes—the one was full of the desire for action, for employing her own energy to attain her ends, for satisfaction to be won by effort; the other, passive, needing no facts, content with the unreal, had drifted off to the heaven of imagination, and revelled in delights that her own fancy was providing for her. The image in her heart had risen out of her, and framed itself in the air before her; in the dream-light she saw Yaransk; in the dream-song she heard Yaransk; in the dream-worship she knelt before Yaransk. And she smiled more and more brightly at the beauty of her dream.

"Frieda!" called out Madame Jelle, suddenly.

The girl started, trembled, shook her arms, pressed her fingers on her eyes, looked anxiously around her, and asked, "Where am I? Ah, yes, I remember."

Sadly, she gazed straight before her.

"Frieda," said Madame Jelle, gravely, almost solemnly, "I am beginning to incline to the impres-

sion that I have made a vast mistake. I am beginning to suspect that, after all, the ideal is a mortal enemy to the real, and can never be converted into a permanently reliable, or even a momentarily useful, ally for it. With all the deep attachment I feel for you, I am, most certainly, losing the thoroughness of the confidence I had in you when we first met. What is happening now is making me imagine that not only our processes, but our objects too, are inherently antagonistic."

Frieda had listened to this attack sitting up in her chair, looking frightenedly at Madame Jelle.

"Oh, my dear, kind friend," she exclaimed, "how can you pain me by such cruel words? Surely, you do not mean them?"

"I love you with all the tenderness I can give; with much more even than I supposed I had in me; but I mean what I say. You and I are no longer working and feeling together. A crisis has arisen in which we have turned our backs on each other. That is the truth."

Frieda rose. She stood before Madame Jelle. After an instant she knelt down, put her arms round her, and whispered, "I understand you. I need no explanation from you. Yes, it is the truth. My dreams are not following your realities. What will you do to me?"

"Do to you?" echoed Madame Jelle, lifting up Frieda's head and looking keenly at her; "I will go on loving you, because you deserve to be loved, even if you disappoint every hope I form."

Frieda murmured, "Indeed, indeed it grieves me bitterly to disappoint you; but—but—I cannot accept

the love of M. Jules. That is what you mean—is it not?"

"In part, that is what I mean. But there is more. Not only do you reject Jules, but you love Yaransk; and I think the second fact causes me even more pain than the first."

Frieda colored and hung down her head wistfully.

"No," she answered, "no. I do not love him—at least I cannot think I do. My feeling for him is not love. It does not correspond to what I understand by love. I know nothing of him—except that he has a mighty will, that he is, indeed, a man, and that I look up to him as my master. But he does not represent to me a lover."

"Poor child! Poor child!" exclaimed Madame Jelle, clasping her hands. "What is to be your future, if this folly lasts? Not only will you break the heart of Jules; not only will you sadden me profoundly; but you will destroy yourself. This man will never take you to his heart and call you his. He will operate on you, dissect you, torture you, and leave you. Is that your notion of a master?"

Frieda made no reply. Soon afterwards Madame Jelle wished her good-night.

Next morning, early, Jules Jelle came in to see his aunt. He described to her the miseries of his new position, spoke despondingly of the present and the future, moaned over the swollen vanity of his father, and at last asked for news of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels.

"There is nothing new," said his aunt. "She does not care for you; you know that already."

"May I see her?"

"Yes—so far as I am concerned. But I will not force her to meet you. I will go and ask her whether she consents."

She did consent; with a certain alacrity, even. Directly she came in she looked Jules full in the face, and said, "I am glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you. I have to tell you that I am grateful for your proposal that I should become your wife. I have to tell you that I have no wish so deep as to give satisfaction to Madame Jelle, who begs me to consent to the proposal. But I have also to tell you that I am unable to comply with your desire and hers; and that, as I see no prospect whatever that I shall change my mind, it is my duty to add, with extreme regret, that this must be the last occasion on which I can allude to the subject."

This declaration, the voice in which it was spoken, and the absoluteness of its form, combined to provoke Madame Jelle. She had been feeling, since this troublesome affair began, that she herself was showing neither character nor decision in it; she had been vexed at her own fluctuations; the resolution exhibited by Frieda humiliated her. She, the strong woman, the realist, had not known her own mind; her impressions had shifted with each new accident. But this dreaming girl, this inexperienced child, had acted from the first with steady will, had just expressed that will in the very clearest words, and had refused to lend herself to their plan. She had grown unaccustomed to opposition, and here was opposition in its most annoying, because in its most personal, form. Yet, notwithstanding the bitterness of her irritation, Madame Jelle was too essentially honest

to be able to forget, even under this provocation, the responsibilities which rested on her, and she could not conceal from herself that, however much Frieda might offend her by refusing, circumstances did supply considerable justification for her.

Agitated between these contradictory sensations, she could not decide what course to follow. She looked alternately at Frieda and at Jules, who had sat down opposite to each other, and were remaining silent.

At last Jules rose, and, speaking with much dignity of manner, declared, "I thank you, mademoiselle, for the distinctness of the communication you have been pleased to make to me. I cannot drive out hope; but I insist no longer. With deep respect, I ask permission to withdraw from your presence."

He left the room.

Frieda then came to Madame Jelle, and, in a shaken voice, asked, "Do I pain you very much?"

"You pain me horribly," was the reply. "I do not disguise from you that, at this moment, my feelings towards you are very strained. Instead of providing me with new joys, you have introduced new troubles into my life, and, as I have lost the habit of suffering, I chafe against you as its cause."

CHAPTER XI.

In the afternoon Frieda sat down before the piano in the drawing-room of the Duchess d'Austerlitz. She came there without pleasure; a weight was on her; she had rather have stayed at home. Yaransk spoke to her; yet she felt no impulse; a mist was around her. She ran her hands over the keys; they made no answer to her; they felt cold. But she was there to sing, and had to sing; so, with an effort, she began the "Mondnach" of Schumann. She warmed somewhat as she neared the end, but there was no resonance in her tones. When she had finished, the Duchess said, as in duty bound, though with no enthusiasm, "Delightful, quite delightful. Pray go on."

Yaransk sat away, in the shadow of a curtain. Frieda could scarcely see him; she felt vaguely that he was there, but he had not agitated her. She had the consciousness that if his spirit did not aid her, she could sing no more. Suddenly, as she waited, the air was full of his presence and his power; the inspiration came; it seized her with a hot embrace, it enveloped her, it evoked her, it fired her.

Excitedly she looked up; she stretched out her arms as if to grasp in them still more of the enchantment that floated round her, then drew them back and hesitated; she struck some chords; the opening

notes of the accompaniment of "Elsa's Dream" dropped from her fingers. Almost imperceptibly the voice joined in; gradually it grew; the melody gained strength, and spread, and swelled; superbly it pealed forth; in a crash it burst; out rang a cry of fervid passion, "Will er Gemahl mich heissen, geb ich ihm, was ich bin!"

A vibration ran through the room; but every one was silent. It was not for many seconds that M. d'Armagnac dared to whisper to Madame d'Austerlitz, "Even if the swan were dying, its music could not be more glorious than that."

He walked slowly to Frieda, who was sitting with her head down, and said to her, in a low tone, "You have moved me deeply. I am very grateful to you for arousing such emotions in me."

The Duchess came, stroked Frieda's hair, and told her, with a throb, "I did not imagine it would be that."

Yaransk remained motionless, his eyes hidden by his hand.

"After that," added the Duchess, "it would be a sacrilege to ask you to sing again."

At last, Yaransk rose, crossed the room to the piano, looked at Frieda with a distinctly marked expression of pain, and let fall the words, "Dream! dream! It was only a dream!"

Frieda lifted up her head. "Yes, it was a dream," she answered very simply. "It was a vision of what might be; not a prediction of what would be. Alas for Elsa! as soon as her dream was realized, it faded."

"That happens not infrequently to dreams," exclaimed the Duchess, looking first at Frieda and

then at Yaransk, and wondering again if this meant anything.

Madame Jelle, who had not spoken, came up, observing, "It is natural that Mademoiselle de Rothenfels should have sympathy for the dreams of others; she is always dreaming herself."

"Yet, as the Duchess says," put in Yaransk, "the fate of dreams is to fade away. Alas for Elsa, and . . ."

He stopped and fixed his eyes, compassionately, on Frieda.

"And?" she asked, uneasily.

"And," he went on, "alas for all those who dream!"

At this Madame Jelle turned sharply to him, exclaiming, "Mademoiselle de Rothenfels has found in dream a faithful solacing friend, and I am unable to see why you should menace her with consequences because she cherishes it."

"Pardon me, madame," was the reply. "I am certain that Mademoiselle de Rothenfels does not suppose me capable of such a form of action."

"That is the truth, monsieur," attested Frieda, submissively.

"How can that glorious song have led to a difference of opinion?" questioned the Duchess. "Yet such is the ingratitude, the inconsequence of human nature. From the music of the Seraphim you jump to argument. The Seraphim are ashamed of you."

"Will you not sing to us again, mademoiselle," inquired M. d'Armagnac, "even though it be, as the Duchess says, a sacrilege?"

This brought silence. Frieda looked round her; when her eyes reached Yaransk they stopped, as if

she were waiting for an order. They turned back to the keys, and the grave notes of Beethoven's hymn, "Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur," sounded through the room.

"Well, this time," said the Duchess, when it was finished, "you cannot complain of its being a dream: it is a prayer. It made me pray too. I thank you, mademoiselle, for leading me, for an instant, to an occupation that has become unusual to me."

"Song is one of the many voices of the eternal truth," answered Frieda, dreamily.

"Will is another of those voices," added Yaransk. "A woman speaks in one; a man in the other."

"May I ask," inquired Madame Jelle, with marked bitterness of manner, "whether common-sense is also one of those wonderful voices?"

"No, madame," replied Yaransk; "it is not. Common-sense is a purely human invention, possessing no relationship whatever with the eternal."

"If it has no relationship with the eternal, it is, at all events, the own child of truth. You cannot deny that, monsieur."

"If M. Yaransk does not deny it, I do," broke in M. d'Armagnac. "Truth is an absolute, unvarying condition, an unchangeable quantity, subsisting by its own intrinsicality; while common-sense is dependent, not only for its substance, but for its shape and even for its very existence, on accidents, situations, and surroundings: it is as essentially relative as truth is essentially positive. No, no; there is no eternal truth in common-sense."

"Very well argued, Count," put in Madame d'Austerlitz. "I am so entirely of your opinion that I

should like to have expressed it myself. Common-sense has its uses; but it is a very overpraised faculty."

"It is a very ugly faculty," answered Frieda: "it possesses neither beauty, grace, nor charm."

"You too, Frieda?" exclaimed Madame Jelle, trying to recover an appearance of good temper. "Why, I counted on you, at all events, to stand by me."

"Speak of eternal truth, madame," observed Yaransk, with a sneer at the bottom of his voice, "and she will never fail to be at your side. She will follow you, or any one, who points upwards and onwards; but she has no ears for those who would enchain her spirit to the vulgar prudences of life."

"You seem to know her thoughts with singular precision," remarked the Duchess, turning her wide-opened gray eyes on Yaransk, and throwing back her head with a movement of examination.

"Yes, madame, I venture to imagine that I am acquainted with some of the impressions of Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. Circumstances have enabled me to divine them."

He looked at Frieda, who answered, scarcely audibly, "M. Yaransk has guessed my thoughts. I feel what he says I feel."

Madame Jelle clinched her hands with anger.

A moment afterwards she rose, saying, "Well, I suppose there will be no more singing. Your divination has put an end to that, monsieur. So we can wish you good-by, Duchess."

The instant the carriage-door was shut she turned roughly to Frieda, and broke out, "You love that man! This time, at all events, you cannot deny it."

Frieda looked straight at her, did not hesitate, and

replied, as simply as if she were making an observation about the weather, "Yes, I think now that I do love him—though what I feel for him is not at all what I expected love to be. He has done to me what you desired that I should do to you—he has filled me with himself. It is a delight to me to humble myself before him. It is true that I have no tender affection for him, such as stories paint; I scarcely know him even. And yet he is my sovereign, my light. Yes, I suppose I do love him—now."

All this was said with such calm, that the tranquillity of her tone added a curious force to the words.

"And Jules?" exclaimed Madame Jelle, seizing Frieda's wrist.

"M. Jules? I am—sorry for him."

"Sorry for him? That is all you have to tell me?"

"That is all," was the reply.

Madame Jelle flung Frieda's arm away from her, and, with compressed lips and whitened cheeks, threw herself into the corner of the carriage and closed her eyes.

On reaching the Cours la Reine, she went straight to her working-room, and closed the door violently.

Frieda followed her slowly across the hall, reopened the door, advanced to her, and said, with dull utterance, "Decide. I am here to obey you. Do not forget that I am your thing, as I told you at La Saigne. In this moment of trial I remember, and I love you. Am I to stay with you? Am I to leave you? I await your orders."

These words were pronounced by Frieda as if they did not concern her. Her voice was gentle, placid, undisturbed. It was evident that she spoke because

it was, at the moment, an external mechanical duty to speak, and to say what she did say; but it was equally manifest that her thoughts were far away, and that they were but feebly conscious of the language she was employing. She seemed, indeed, to be hearkening to a far-off voice, and to be simply echoing its instructions.

For a time Madame Jelle took no notice of her. Then, with impulse, she rose, took Frieda in her arms, kissed her impetuously, and cried out, "After all, it is no fault of yours. I am wrong to blame you; very wrong. It is frightful—but you are not responsible. I am caught in my own trap. I have done it all myself. I wanted new emotions, and indeed—indeed I have got them. Oh, that hateful Yaransk! How I loathe him!"

"He is my soul's life," insisted Frieda, very softly. "I know you say he will not marry me; but what does that matter? Beyond this love there is nothing."

Madame Jelle scrutinized her anxiously.

"Poor child," she whispered, "is your reason gone?"

"Of course. My reason has gone out of me; his reason has come into me. I have ceased to be myself."

Madame Jelle shivered, and joined her hands.

"And this," she murmured, "is the condition in which I wished to place myself! This is will-infusion! These are its consequences! That odious Yaransk! He was right, indeed, when he said that night that 'none of us are masters of what we give or take.' What has he given to this unhappy girl? What has she taken from him? And Jules? My poor Jules!"

She kissed Frieda again and told her—"Do not doubt my affection for you; you try it sorely—but nothing will change it, whatever you may do."

Jules Jelle came in at six, and begged his aunt to let him stop to dinner. He said his spirit was worn out; that he shrank away from his father, whose vanity was more unendurable than ever; and that if Frieda persisted in refusing to be his wife, there was nothing for him but to leave France.

Madame Jelle tried to reason with him, but in vain. He was completely unhinged. His only clear ideas were, that he was ashamed of his father, that he loved a woman who rejected him, and that he hated Yaransk.

"I do think I had better go," was the sole answer he could make.

"Upon my word I am beginning to think so too," confessed his aunt at last. "Frieda will never take you."

"How do you know that?" asked Jules, half angrily, half protestingly.

His aunt rose from her seat, came to him, put her hands on his shoulders, and replied with affectionate despondency, "She will not take you because she loves Yaransk."

Jules Jelle remained motionless for a few seconds, watching her with dull eyes; afterwards, he stood up, his gaze still fixed upon her; his stare became intense.

"She loves Yaransk?" came from him, with an accent that did not sound like his own. "She loves Yaransk?"

"She told me so this afternoon."

"Yaransk—has taken her from me?"

"No, no; he has not taken her. She has given herself, under the influence of the domination he has exerted over her against you. He has willed that she shall not love *you;* but not, so far as I can form an opinion, that she shall love *him.*"

Her nephew scarcely heard the end of the sentence; he had turned and was gone, telling her, as he went —"I shall be back presently."

A minute afterwards he had jumped into a cab, crying to the driver—

"Rue de la Paix, Hôtel Mirabeau. Quick!"

Yaransk was dressing for dinner when Jules Jelle entered his room. He looked round from his glass and asked, contemptuously—

"Have you come to announce to me your marriage with Mademoiselle de Rothenfels?"

Jules, pale, trembling, scarcely able to guide his movements, walked rapidly close up to him, strained his eyes at him, and stuttered out, "Mademoiselle de Rothenfels loves *you.*"

"Ah!" was the careless rejoinder. "I am sorry to hear it. She is a charming person—at least she would be if she were not German. I almost like her. But I do not want her love; any more, I fancy, than she wants yours."

"Why, then, have you made her love you—with your diabolical influence?"

"I presume that you have still enough reason left to be able to comprehend that I have not made her love me. If she loves me—of which I know absolutely nothing—I repeat that I am sorry for it. It must be what is called by the students of influence, a collateral accident. Anyhow, the love which,

according to your information, she is good enough to feel for me, will aid in preventing her from marrying you. From that point of view I shall do all I can to stimulate it."

He proceeded, with entire calm, to tie the knot of his cravat.

"Then you do not deny," went on the other, his voice stammering with fury, "that if Mademoiselle de Rothenfels refuses to be my wife, it is because you have stood in between us?"

The Russian put on his coat, walked to the fire, turned his back to it with his hands behind him, and, in a tone of mixed commiseration and scorn, observed—

"I am not acquainted with her motives. All I know is that, if she refuses to be your wife, I applaud her decision. I may as well add, for your information, that I have done my utmost to inspire her with it."

Jules Jelle shook with passion.

"We once were friends," he gasped out, "and yet you behave to me like this?"

"It is precisely because we once were friends that I behave to you like this. I have warned you that I will not permit you to be faithless to the bond we accepted together."

"Bond? There is no bond that can chain my heart. Do you pretend that political doctrines are to deprive me of my liberty of love? Besides, though I love a German, I continue to hate Germany."

At this Yaransk made, at last, a movement of rage; but he checked himself, and continued, with persistent calm—

"Do not appeal to me for an explanation. Look to your own life for it. Look to your former convictions, if you remember them. Look to truth, fidelity, and honor, if they still exist in you. They will tell you what you want to know; they will tell you why you cannot marry a German."

Suddenly, as he finished the sentence, his appearance was transformed. His habitual mocking calm was gone; a wave of fury seemed to seize him and to roll around him; with a demoniacal laugh he repeated twice the words "Marry a German!" Then he stepped towards Jules Jelle, his eyes flashing, his hands clinched, and hissed out, as if his voice were a torrent falling on to red-hot iron—

"And if you want another reason why I, of all men, tell you it is impossible for you to marry a German, listen to *my* experience with a German wife. But, first of all, look here, Jules Jelle. See this sight. Look at my right hand, red with German blood, shed to wipe out a German's shame."

As he spurted out the words, he lifted his right hand close up to Jules Jelle's eyes.

Jules started back. There was an expression in Yaransk's face that was very nearly fiendish.

"Listen. Listen and understand, if understanding is left you. Understand why I—I—I—hate Germans. I have not told you yet because it is a tale that burns my throat, and because it was no business of yours. But now, I have a reason for informing you. So, hear."

Speaking as if his words were flame and scorched him as they passed his lips, he blazed out—

"I loved a German girl. I took her for my wife.

I loved her with the whole intensity of my soul; and, in those days, I had a soul, and it was indeed intense; it was before she parched it. She left me with a German—do you hear? I caught him—do you hear? I put my sword through him—do you hear?"

He laughed another awful laugh, a laugh that clanked and grated with the delight of vengeance.

"Ugh!" he muttered, "I still feel—there—there, the dull resistance of his flesh."

Again he held up his right hand and shook it in the air.

"It was with this hand that I gave myself the joy of killing him. Look at it. Do you see it? And yet," he went on more slowly, "his death was but a small satisfaction. I did not die. I have lived on to groan. She, too, is alive; I have left her to her shame. And now, Jules Jelle," he added, with an abrupt return of gentleness that was almost more frightful than his rage, "will you, too, marry a German?"

Once more, he lifted his hand and gazed at it as if he cherished it for the memory of what it had done.

"The blood-mark is there," he whispered softly. "It is my only consolation."

The two men were silent for a while.

Yaransk asked again, "Will you, too, marry a German?"

"Yes, I will," replied Jules Jelle; "if she will take me."

Yaransk moved back. In a low grave tone he began to speak, his voice gaining strength as he went on, and breaking once more, at the end, into the savage convulsion which had marked it while he told the story of his own wife.

"Monsieur, we have lived in unity of faith, in unity of purpose. I knew you weak, but I supposed you true. I find, at last, that you are false. You appear to consider that your falseness does not concern me, that all I have to do is to stand aside and let it have its way, that I have no sufficient motive for interfering in your affairs. That is not my view. Sufficiency of motive results from intensity of conviction. Intensity of conviction was once a common property between us; it involved us in a partnership; I refuse my consent to the dissolution of that partnership. If you have become incapable of continuing to discharge your share of partnership duty towards me, I intend to go on discharging mine towards you. Mine does not vary because it pleases you to abandon yours. My duty is to protect you from yourself, and I will perform it. I informed you, a few minutes ago, that I have personal, as well as general, motives for the feelings I entertain towards Germans. I did so in order to make you recognize that those feelings are, in me, immutable, indelible, imperishable. There is an end of our friendship; but our partnership lives on. You *shall not*, while I can prevent it, be faithless to what you owe to *me*. I despise you; but I hold you to your word. I happen to possess the means of rendering impossible your marriage with Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. She has fallen under my authority; under my authority she shall remain. Never shall she consent to be your wife. I will stand between you and her, a barrier that no force of yours can remove, a punisher that no prayer of yours can soften. Give up your odious passion, or, through the German girl

you dare to love, I will torture your soul out of you. Now, leave my room, and never re-enter it. From this moment our acquaintance ceases."

Jules Jelle had stood glaring at Yaransk while he spoke. In infuriated emotion, in horror, almost in frenzy, he had listened. Choked, stifled by exasperation, no answer had come from him. At last, with difficulty, he got out, "I have hated you for years. Now I defy you. Mademoiselle de Rothenfels shall be my wife."

Ten minutes afterwards he was back in his aunt's room. He fell into a chair, and, as if he scarcely knew what he was doing, said to her, "An old friendship is broken. I think he insulted me. But my head is not clear. He says he is married to a German, who ran away from him with a German, whom he killed. And he says that the mark is on his hand, and that it is his sole joy."

At her request, he described to her, as he could, the details of the scene.

"My poor Jules," she sighed, when she had heard all, "sit down and try to calm yourself. All this is very lamentable. What will come out of it? I think I ought to tell Frieda at once that Yaransk is married; the information may possibly produce a good impression on her."

She went up, found Frieda walking up and down her room, and asked her,

"What have you been doing while you have been alone?"

"I have been listening to a sound in the air; it has seemed to me that I have heard, almost unceasingly, an echo of the motto of my race, 'Go on.'"

"Decidedly, Frieda, you are crazy. I must consult a doctor about you."

Madame Jelle said this brightly; but there was in her expression a dark underlying cloud. She continued, "But, before I see what can be done to put your reason straight again, let me inquire to what end you propose to 'go on.'"

"As regards that I shall have no personal choice. I feel more and more that I am in the hands of a guide and master, and that I depend upon his will."

"Your guide and master is married," was the outspoken reply. "It appears that he has a wife."

For some seconds Frieda showed neither surprise nor regret; she remained quite calm. All she said, at first, was, in a dull tone, "Ah! he has a wife!"

But, by degrees, she woke up to the meaning of the information conveyed to her so abruptly by Madame Jelle. She repeated several times, in a voice that commenced to vibrate, "Ah! he has a wife! he has a wife!"

Madame Jelle watched her, and seeing no signs in her of any very great perturbation, went on, "I have come to ask you whether you will go down to dinner, or whether you will dine here? Jules is with me."

"Did he bring you this news?"

"Yes."

"And you still wish me to look 'elsewhere'?"

"For Jules and for myself, I wish it as much as ever. For your sake, I wish it more than ever, since I have heard this."

"I will come down to dinner."

At table they spoke little. It was not till they reached the drawing-room and the servants had left

that conversation became possible. Frieda began it. "Monsieur," she said, turning to Jules Jelle, "I have told you that I could make no further allusion to the proposal to become your wife, which you have done me the honor to address to me, and I have informed your aunt that, so far as I can measure my impressions, I am bound, completely bound, to M. Yaransk. As it appears that M. Yaransk is married, and as you may perhaps imagine that the knowledge of that fact may modify my feelings, I have thought it right to speak to you once more and to declare to you that my feelings are not of a nature to be changed by any discovery of that kind."

Jules Jelle had followed her words with painful earnestness; he answered, instantly, "May I venture to ask how it is that, in so short a time—in less than a week—you have become 'completely bound to M. Yaransk'? "

"I would describe the process to you with frank precision, if I could. I have nothing to hide. On the contrary, I am proudly joyous to have had the privilege of encountering my ruler. But how or why it is that he has become my ruler, I cannot tell." She added, sadly, "All he has told me about it is that he is doing it for science."

"For science!" exclaimed Madame Jelle. "Surely you do not believe that, Frieda?"

"I have just told you that I know nothing of the process; I am acquainted only with the result. The influence he exercised over me the first day I met him—less than a week ago, as M. Jelle reminds me—has remained unweakened; it has been renewed each time I have seen him since, and seems now to

go on acting on me without his presence. It has led me blindly, unknowingly, to love him—if, indeed, what I feel for him can really be called love. I can only suppose that my nature was particularly open to the pressure of a determined will, and that his nature is producing that on mine."

Jules Jelle groaned audibly.

"But how is it to end, Frieda?" insisted Madame Jelle.

"I give no thought to the end. The present is all that concerns me. I am happy in it. No, not happy in it—possessed by it, to the exclusion of all else."

"You may indeed say, 'to the exclusion of all else,'" echoed Madame Jelle, angrily.

"May I go back to my room?" asked Frieda. "I have said all I had to say."

"Yes, poor child; yes. We need not keep you here. Now, Jules," gave out Madame Jelle, as Frieda closed the door, "the time has come for me to act. For the moment, you can do no more with Yaransk. I will try my own hand on him. I will go to him myself to-morrow. He *shall* set Frieda free. I am in a growing terror of what may happen. In her actual condition of mind she may run off to the Hôtel Mirabeau. And then?"

"She loves him to such a point as that?"

"It is not exactly that she loves him. She has just said herself, that she doubts whether it is really love. There may be some love in it—of a sort; but the mass of it is 'influence.' Now I see what 'influence' really means. Ah! if I had known it sooner! What an escape I have had myself! In the morning I will have it out with him."

CHAPTER XII.

At ten next day Madame Jelle reached the Hôtel Mirabeau. Yaransk was at home. She scarcely looked at him as she entered, and began instantly—"I have come to inform you that Mademoiselle de Rothenfels has not been released by you, according to your promise, from the consequences of your action on her; that she is in a condition of mind which may become dangerous to her; and that it is your imperative duty to set her free. My presence here is proof enough of the gravity and the urgency of the situation."

"My promise to release her was essentially conditional. If I remember right, I told you that I hoped there would be no necessity for me to renew my influence over her. That necessity has arisen, and therefore I have renewed the influence. Nothing can be more simple than my position."

"You talk in that cool way of my nephew's love and of this girl's peace? By what right do you dare to interfere? By what right do you presume to constitute yourself the director of my nephew's conduct?"

"I beg you, madame, not to force me to speak words that would be wounding to you."

"I care nothing for any wounds you can inflict on me. I do not think of myself, or even of Jules. My sole preoccupation is about Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. It is for her that I am here. I tell you that

her health and reason are threatened by the disastrous influence you have obtained over her."

"I am really very sorry that Mademoiselle de Rothenfels should be mixed up in this. I will say more still, and will confess to you that I have been asking myself whether I am justified in making her suffer for another's fault. But you must allow me to remind you that I cannot allow your nephew to marry her, and that I am obliged to use her as an instrument against him. The question is not between her and me, but between your nephew and me."

"But I tell you, monsieur, that you *shall not* interfere."

Yaransk smiled, lifted his hands deprecatingly, but made no reply.

"It is odious," she went on, more and more violently, "it is infamous, it is revolting, that you should have the insolence to thrust yourself into our affairs."

Again he raised his hands, with the same expostulating smile.

"Once more," cried Madame Jelle, "I summon you to liberate her."

"With the sincerest pleasure, madame, I will liberate her, as soon as I have acquired the certainty that your nephew has given up all idea of marrying her."

"Does that mean that you will not unshackle her now—at once?"

"That is my meaning."

At this Madame Jelle lost her head altogether. The calm resistance with which Yaransk met her, the resolution of his attitude, the failure of the effort she had made, combined to destroy her patience, to

infuriate her pride, and to render her incapable of further combat. Five minutes had sufficed to make her feel that she was vanquished. Her humiliation and her anger were so intense that she could bear no more: abruptly she abandoned the idea of obtaining what she had come to seek, and rushed out of the room.

"Poor girl!" murmured Yaransk, as he returned to the fire, after closing the door. "I was not naturally cruel; I have been made so by my experience of life; but, honestly, I dislike torturing this child. Why has that wretched apostate allowed himself to fall in love with her? Abstractedly, it is my duty to act as the guardian of his unworthy honor—about that there can be no doubt; but, practically, I fancy it would be more human if I were to abandon the whole thing, and leave the miserable fellow to his shame. But then I am not human; I have not been human since that day. Ah, that day! Why did I tell the story last night to that reptile? It was no concern of his."

He took his head in his hands, and thought intently.

At noon Jules Jelle got away from his father, and hurried to the Cours la Reine to learn what had happened between his aunt and Yaransk.

After describing, with the bitterest indignation, the interview she had had, she added—"I have thought it over and over, and have decided to take Frieda away to Italy. Change of surroundings may operate healthily on her. I can imagine no other remedy. We will start immediately—to-morrow night if possible."

"May I come with you?"

"How can you ask me such an idiotic question?

Of course not. If I am able to work her round, we will see. For the moment your place is not at her side. Before you can approach her she must be set free from Yaransk."

"And what am I to do meanwhile?" he asked gloomily.

"Do your duty as your father's secretary, and reflect over the folly with which you have behaved."

Later in the day Madame Jelle entered Frieda's room.

"My child," she said, "I have made up my mind to leave Paris with you to-morrow night. We go direct to Nice, and thence on to Italy. Tell Virginie to get your things ready. Travel is the only medicine to apply to you."

Frieda raised her head languidly, answering, "I thank you tenderly. This is another proof of your constant goodness to me. But I am unable to leave Paris. I am tied here by a chain that I cannot break. Yesterday I could have gone back to Augsburg; to-day it seems to me that no force could drag me away. Something has entered into me since last night. I cannot go."

"I tell you that you *shall* go!" cried Madame Jelle, excitedly, seizing Frieda and shaking her almost roughly.

Frieda remained passive, and repeated, in a low voice, "I cannot go. The impossibility is material. If you drag me away, I shall leap out of the train. He has bound me—more strongly than ever. I am crushed by the immensity of his will."

Madame Jelle spoke no more. After looking attentively at Frieda, she went straight downstairs,

wrote a note to her brother-in-law to say that she needed to see him at once on a most urgent matter, and sent it off to the Ministry.

He replied that he had to dine with the Prime Minister, but would be with her as soon as possible after ten.

"Jacques," she said, as he came in, "let me speak first, and do not interrupt me. Your son has fallen in love with my companion, and wants to marry her. Until this afternoon I desired that he should do so; but I have now changed my mind, and I want your assistance to get Mademoiselle de Rothenfels away from Paris."

"Rosalie," exclaimed Jacques Jelle, in manifest distress, "I *must* interrupt you! It pains me cruelly that you offer me no congratulations on my accession to power. This is the first time we have met since I received my portfolio, and you do not say one word . . ."

"What is your portfolio to me? I wrote to you, with my compliments, the day after you were appointed. That is enough, in all conscience. I have something more important than your portfolio to talk about now. I told you not to interrupt me. Do hold your tongue until I have finished. Then you can speak."

Jacques Jelle did not dare to quarrel with his sister-in-law; she awed him; he felt that she despised him, but was afraid to resent her contempt. So he contented himself with assuming an attitude of poignantly suffering dignity, and listened once more.

"You are acquainted," she went on, "with the hate of Germany that was professed by Jules and his

friend Yaransk, and with their interesting projects for eradicating Prussia from the map of Europe. Knowing the two men, you will not be surprised to learn that, though Jules, who is in love, appears to have abandoned his devastating theories, and is ready, in his weakness, to marry a German, Yaransk, whose opinions are more durable, has determined to prevent his former ally from falling into such a disgrace."

"As a Minister, as a Frenchman, and as a father, I approve M. Yaransk," put in Jacques Jelle, timidly.

"In order to turn Mademoiselle de Rothenfels against Jules, this Yaransk has been operating on her by 'will-influence,' and . . ."

"What is 'will-influence,' if you please?"

"Oh, do let me go on. It is in no way necessary that you should understand; all I want of you is that you should act."

Jacques Jelle's expression of wounded loftiness became even more obtrusively conspicuous; he looked up beseechingly towards the special heaven which protects Ministers; but he said no more.

"He has been operating on her, I say, by 'will-influence,' and has reduced her—she is an extraordinary sensitive subject—to a condition of blind obedience to his commands. Her subordination to him is so thorough that she refuses to leave Paris, because she believes that he has forbidden her to do so. She informed me this afternoon that if I take her away (which, for the sake of her health and peace, I am most anxious to do) she will leap out of the train. And she would do it. I am frightened at her condition, and must get her clear of it, no

matter how. Yaransk says that he is ready to liberate her as soon as he has acquired the certainty that Jules abandons all idea of marrying her. It humiliates me to give way, particularly under threats; but, after thinking over all the details, I have decided to sacrifice the project of marriage—much as I hold to it—in order to induce this monstrous Russian to set the poor child free from the sorcery he has cast over her. Jules has quarrelled with him; so have I; neither of us can go back to him. Consequently, you must go. I have sent for you to inform you that you must see him to-morrow morning, must tell him that we renounce the marriage, and that he must therefore restore complete liberty of spirit to Mademoiselle de Rothenfels. Now I am ready to listen to you."

"But, Rosalie," stammered out the other, utterly upset by this manner of treating him, and struggling between indignation and fear of his sister-in-law, "would it be proper—I might say appropriate—or, in other words, in accordance with the fitness of things, that, I, a Minister of the Republic, should take the first step towards this foreigner? It seems to me—I mean, if you will let me say so, that there is no doubt whatever—that, in my official position, he ought to come to me. I will grant him an audience; I will, indeed; and he shall not have to wait in the anteroom—not at all; I will go so far as that. But I cannot . . ."

"You will go to him yourself to-morrow morning," went on Madame Jelle, imperatively, "and you will say to him, 'Monsieur, you told Madame Jean Jelle yesterday that you will emancipate Mademoiselle de

Rothenfels once for all from the domination you are exercising over her, provided my son gives up all idea of making that young lady his wife. I come, in consequence, to give you the united pledge of the father and aunt of Jules Jelle to that effect.' I shall call for you, Jacques, at a quarter to ten, and shall wait at the door of the hotel while you are with him."

Jacques Jelle, being the feebler of the two, had to give way. He replied, "I disapprove entirely of your manner of proceeding; but I yield to you."

"His Excellency the Minister for Docks and Steamboats," was announced to Yaransk next morning. Pompously he entered the room; pompously he sat down; pompously he waved his hand.

"I have come to you, monsieur," he began, "to acquaint you with my firm resolve—I may say, with my unshakable, inflexible determination—that my son shall never marry a German. Subsidiarily—in other words, conjointly—I have to state to you that, my sister-in-law, Madame Jean Jelle, has arrived, since yesterday, at the same intention. My own decision is solid, unchangeable, unconditional, as every decision ought to be which is expressed by a member of the Government of France. My sister-in-law's decision, on the contrary, being that of a woman, is naturally—necessarily, or inevitably, I might say—conditional. The condition she attaches to it is, monsieur, that you shall immediately release Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, my sister-in-law's companion, from what has been described to me as the 'will-influence' you have been exercising—deleteriously to mind and body, I am told—over that young

person. Madame Jean Jelle is of opinion that you can have no further motive for maintaining that influence, now that a marriage between my son and the young person in question is excluded from the eventualities of the future."

Yaransk had listened quietly. He answered with calm, "I fail to perceive, Monsieur le Ministre, that the resolution which, according to the communication you have been good enough to make me, has been adopted by yourself and Madame Jean Jelle, suffices, to use your words, to exclude such a marriage from the eventualities of the future. M. Jules Jelle is an even more important actor in the play than yourself or your sister-in-law, and I do not gather from you that he also has arrived at the decision to which you refer."

"Hum, hum," mumbled Jacques Jelle. "I cannot admit that there is any weight in your objection. It had not, I confess, presented itself to my mind, which is occupied, absorbed, monopolized, by the study of affairs of State; but, now that you lay it before me, I repel it. When I, the father"—here he grew turgidly grandiose—"declare that my son shall not marry a German, I conceive, monsieur, that the hypothesis is exhausted. The projects of a son, if he has any, fade into—into—into—the fit word does not occur to me—I mean dissolve, that is to say, melt away, before the authority of a father."

"Ah?" observed Yaransk.

"Yes, monsieur, you may regard the project as terminated; in fact, as having never existed. Consequently; therefore; that is to say, in consequence, I beg you to authorize me to convey to my sister-in-

law the promise which, in her name and in my own, I solicit from you."

Yaransk reflected for some time; at last he said, "I cannot give you an immediate answer. I must think over the question. At three o'clock I will do myself the honor of bringing my reply in person to Madame Jean Jelle. I trust that, notwithstanding all that has happened, she will be graciously pleased to receive me."

"Is this a trick? "asked Yaransk to himself, when his visitor had disappeared. "I think not, because that aunt is scarcely of a sort to employ subterfuges; she has a character, and means, probably, what she says; so far as she is concerned, I fancy I can trust her word. The father is a fool; he does not count. But the son? The girl will have nothing to do with him so long as I hold her tight; but, if I let her go, he might end by winning her over; there are capacities in him that might please a woman; he is a traitor, but he is not an idiot. What shall I do? I pity the poor girl; her sole sin is that she is German; in all other respects she is a taking person, and I can almost understand how that miserable renegade has been caught by her. Shall I give way? I should please Madame Jelle if I did, and she is so thoroughly truthful and earnest that I should almost feel a pleasure in contenting her. She, at all events, is worthy of respect. The girl, too—poor creature—does not deserve to suffer; she has had pain enough, I doubt not, without all this. I am half inclined to wash my hands of the whole thing, and go home. I have time, however, before three o'clock, to weigh all the aspects of the case; I will not decide now, espe-

cially as I have got over my rage against that betrayer, am quite placid and composed, and can trust myself to be wise. It occurred to me yesterday that it would be more human to let the girl go. But, ought I to be human?"

Madame Jelle was deeply angered at the insolence of Yaransk in presuming to present himself at her house, but still she awaited his coming with extreme impatience. Her anxiety was so great that it seemed to her the hour fixed by him would never arrive. As the clock struck he entered.

"I feared, madame," he said, "that the termination, under painful circumstances, of the friendship which once existed between your nephew and myself, and the unsatisfactory ending of the visit you were pleased to make to me, might have rendered you unwilling to admit me to your presence. I beg, therefore, to thank you for allowing me to see you. I have come to tell you, after thinking over the message you have sent me through M. Jacques Jelle, that, having entire confidence in your word, I am ready to release Mademoiselle de Rothenfels from all further influence on my part."

"Without conditions?"

"Without conditions—beyond your own promise. I have considered the whole matter, and have arrived at the judgment that the management of M. Jules Jelle may now be left in your hands only. Until today I have been convinced that, after all that has passed between us, it was my duty to protect him from himself; but, after deep reflection, I have changed my mind. It is unnecessary to explain the reason of my altered views. All I will say is that, if

I decide to leave your nephew to follow out his career by himself, it is because I trust your word, and because I feel real compassion for Mademoiselle de Rothenfels, and regret that I have caused her pain."

"You have no more to say? You do not require to see her?"

"No. I can undo my work from a distance, just as, for some days, I have been performing it at a distance. When once communication is established between two wills, physical presence ceases to be necessary; spiritual presence suffices. Besides, for other reasons, it is better that I should not see her. All I have to add, madame, is that I am grateful to you for your kindness to me in the past, and that, most respectfully, I say farewell to you."

Madame Jelle stood straight, her eyes fixed coldly on him.

He turned to go. At the same instant the door opened and Frieda entered the room.

"I come," she said, placidly, to Yaransk. "Your voice called me."

Madame Jelle sprang forward, as if to intervene; but Yaransk raised his hand, exclaiming violently, "Leave her to me. Mademoiselle, I did not call you. I shall call you no more. With all the imperative force my will can exercise, I order you to forget me."

Frieda looked at him; at first with incredulous surprise; then with infinite sadness.

"My master," she murmured, her arms held out in entreaty, "do not repel me."

"How awful!" gasped out Madame Jelle; "I could not have believed this, if I had not seen it. Frightful! frightful!"

Yaransk seemed puzzled. The case was evidently new to him. But his hesitation did not endure. An expression of tremendous, adamantine, ruthless will dashed into his face. His hands sprang out before him; the stiffened fingers pointed straight at Frieda; his eyes glared at her with iron fixedness; his whole body shook with convulsive intensity of resolution.

"Obey!" he shouted.

Submissively, Frieda bent her head and crossed her hands upon her chest.

Almost in awe, Madame Jelle leaned forward, and intently watched the scene.

For two minutes the three remained motionless, as if turned to stone. Then Yaransk drew a deep breath, dropped his arms in exhaustion, and closed his eyes.

"I can do no more now," he muttered.

Madame Jelle ran to Frieda, lifted her and almost carried her to a sofa, whispering as she went, "My child, how are you?"

The girl looked at her. "Why does he try to drive his memory from me?" she asked, mournfully. "I only ask to be allowed to think of him."

Yaransk had sat down; he held his head in his hands and was breathing heavily. He glanced at Frieda, saying, as if to himself, "I am using very sharp-edged tools; the wounds they inflict are deep."

Faint words came to him across the room, "Why do you thrust me from you?"

Frieda's eyes were fixed on him beseechingly.

He rose, came to her, and looked at her with pity, almost, indeed, with tenderness.

"Poor child! poor child!" he sighed. "This must

end. But how?" He turned to Madame Jelle, continuing, "I have done too much. I did not make allowance for the softness of the wax I was handling. Yet, trust me, I will undo my work, no matter what the effort costs me. I will carry out honestly my share of our bargain. Only, I fear I shall need more time than I had calculated."

After a moment, he added, "It is useless for me to stop here. I have no strength left in me. If will can undo what will has done, I will set her free. But, with her extraordinary nature, I almost doubt, for the first time, my power of undoing."

"Then what will happen to her?" asked Madame Jelle, terrified.

Yaransk shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply. He sat down again, overspent, and thought; the others watching him.

Suddenly he rose and slowly left the room.

Frieda trembled as he disappeared, but did not speak. Madame Jelle took her hand.

"And now, poor sufferer," she asked, "will you go with me to Italy?"

The girl raised her eyes, answering, "If you like. Perhaps. I suppose so. What stood in the way is no longer there. But—how tired I am! and how sad I am! It seems to me that another soul has been substituted for my own, and that the new one does not fit my body. Unity is no longer in me. I am made up of elements which fight against each other."

"All that will pass away, dear child. You need change of scene; the view of other sights, the impulse of other thoughts, will lead you back to calm. Yaransk has renounced all further action on you;

the influence he has already exerted over you will fade by degrees."

Frieda's face changed abruptly; she twisted round excitedly to Madame Jelle, and asked, almost harshly, as if anger had rushed into her, "And now, will you tell me, what was his real motive in acting on me? I am certain you know."

The unexpected question, so roughly put, staggered Madame Jelle. Her own excitement had been very great; she, too, was worn by the strain of anxiety and emotion; she hesitated, wondered what answer she had better make; and, in her perplexity, let out the truth.

"His real motive," she replied, falteringly, "was to hold you back from listening to the love of Jules."

A flash of eager hope, almost of joy, spread over Frieda's face. "Did he, then," she cried, "did he want my love for himself?"

"No, no!—indeed no! He did not want it for himself. And, even if he had wanted it, how could you have given it to a man who has a wife already? No; his sole object, in his savage hate of Germans, was to restrain you—a German—from accepting Jules. But he has changed his mind. He came to me just now to tell me that he turns his back on Jules, and sets you free. Now you know all."

Frieda had listened to this explanation with her lips parted and her eyes straining out of her head. She scarcely waited for the end to burst out, in a tempest of sudden passion, with fierce rapidity of speech, "And for such a purpose I have been made to suffer—as I suffer? What! your nephew thrust

his unasked love upon me; his friend thought me unworthy of that love, and tortured me like this, to save the other—from a German? That—that is the truth? Do you know that what you say is hideous?"

Abrupt reaction came; her anger vanished as quickly as it had come; sadness, immense sadness, spread again upon her; she murmured, as if broken by the struggle between pride and love, "And yet—and yet—I love the torturer who has inflicted on me this pain. I love the merciless master who has subjected me to this monstrous humiliation. I love him," she went on, with returning agitation, "yes, I love him with the whole soul that he has torn from me. I love this man who does not want my love—this man who cannot give me his. I love him for his power, for his tremendous will. I love him because he is, indeed, a man."

"My child, my poor child!" insisted Madame Jelle, as Frieda stopped, prostrated, "the condition in which you find yourself cannot possibly endure. This love you talk of is not love; it is mere emotion, which will die out with the temporary pressure that has aroused it. It is impossible that you can love Yaransk—with a woman's love, I mean. What you feel for him is the outcome of an extraordinarily exciting, but absolutely artificial, situation. It can be nothing more."

"Temporary pressure, artificial situation, mere emotion?" echoed Frieda, faintly. "The force that has been set to work upon me was neither temporary nor artificial. It was a force of resistless might, of unsparing hold, of unending action. Its consequences

will endure in me. They will not disappear. I am bound for all the life that may be mine." She added, "I am ready to go to Italy, if you wish it. Here, there, or elsewhere, my bondage and my love will remain with me."

"I will not argue with you, Frieda: this is not the moment. We will start as soon as possible."

Much worried, Madame Jelle went downstairs, and gave orders to prepare for their departure. Her eager spirit sought distraction in movement.

In the evening Jules Jelle came in. His aunt told him what had happened during the day, and that Frieda had consented to go away.

"How is she to be pulled out of this horrible condition?" asked Jules, anxiously. "Surely her mad love for Yaransk cannot last?"

"All that must be left to itself," replied his aunt. "The cure may be a long one. She must have absolute repose. Abandon all idea of making her your wife, as I have abandoned it."

"Never will I give up the hope of it!" cried Jules, springing to his feet. "I cannot live without her. Yaransk has been our evil genius. All this suffering has been caused by him—by him alone."

"Not by him alone, Jules. You have had your own full share in bringing it about."

"I will not permit him," he called out, "to interfere with me any longer! He has torn her from me. But for him I should have made her love me. He is my accursed enemy. I loathe him. I knew that I should break with him. I will trample on him—spit at him!"

"Please do not talk absurdities, Jules. The situation is too grave for nonsense of that sort."

He quieted down and ceased to speak; but his lips grew tighter together, and his eyes more fixed. His aunt wished him good-night, and told him to go to bed and sleep.

In the street he said to himself, "Ah, I have been talking nonsense, have I? I think not, my aunt. The time has come. I can bear no more, and will wait no longer."

With a purpose before him, and yet half unconsciously, he walked rapidly to the Hôtel Mirabeau. On inquiring for Yaransk, he found that he was out. For three hours he waited for him in the street. It was not till one o'clock had chimed that the Russian got out of a cab at the door. As he recognized Jules, he said, "Ah! I half expected you. I told you never to pass my door again; but all the same, what we have to say had better be pronounced within four walls. Come in, if you please."

As soon as the door was closed, Jules Jelle spoke, at first slowly, sadly; then, as he went on, rapidly, feveredly, furiously.

"For a time, monsieur, we were friends, true friends even, so far as I know. But your need of setting up as the superior of every one you meet led you, very soon, to adopt towards me an attitude which enraged me. I bore your brutal bullying in silence for a while; then I began to complain to you of it; but I obtained no change in your tone towards me. You thought fit to go on behaving to me as if you alone possessed the monopoly of light, of truth,

of reason, and as if I were a contemptible fool, worthy only to be governed automatically by your high thought and will. That, I think, is a correct description of what has passed between us."

Yaransk had listened to these words with a mocking smile on his lips, and his hands thrust carelessly behind his back. He observed—"Go on, monsieur; I presume you have not finished."

"No, I have not finished," was the answer; "indeed I have not finished. Your insolent interference with my feelings and my conduct has now been carried far beyond all that. You have dared, under pretext of what you call our partnership, under your self-constituted guardianship of my principles and honor, to turn from me the love of Frieda de Rothenfels. You have crushed, by your execrable influence, the fulfilment of my happiness. Your work has been so completely done that it is impossible even for you yourself to undo it. Mademoiselle de Rothenfels is your victim; she has been sacrificed, destroyed by you. And you have committed this crime, not from the motive which we both used to describe as patriotism, but out of pure lust of domination, out of the cruelty of your heart, and the mercilessness of your soul. By you, life has been converted into a torture for her and for me. I abhor you. I defy you. I curse you. But our former friendship does not end with idle words like these. I have come here now to tell you how it is to end. This is my farewell to you."

With wild rage he struck at him.

Yaransk sprang lightly aside; the blow did not touch him.

Very coldly, very slowly, his face intensely pale, he let fall the words—"To-morrow I will do my best to kill you—as I killed the other."

Jules Jelle had just enough self-control left in him to stagger in silence from the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

YARANSK sat down quietly before the fire. He was almost calm.

"And this is the use of trying to be human!" he muttered, with a malignant smile. "I am so invariably unsuccessful in my attempts in that direction that it would be presumptuous to imagine that my nature was intended to be human. It is a very practical nature as it is, human or not; but it has one grievous fault—I get excited sometimes, and then I behave like a fool. There are two faculties which make a man, conviction and will; I have them both; but, in their applications, I spoil them sometimes by excitement. The impostor who was here just now has neither of those faculties; there is nothing in him but effervescing emotion, which may look to an uninformed spectator like honest earnestness, but which, when it has bubbled out, leaves only dirty froth behind. And yet, with all his meannesses and feeblenesses, it is sad, from the human point of view, to have to kill him. His aunt will mourn. Well, after all," he said, rising and stretching out his arms, "it is not my fault if he runs his head against the wall; the wall is not responsible. I must send seconds to him in the morning. Glatzow and d'Atteville will do, I think. Yes, I will intrust the affair to them; they will manage it properly. I will write to them at once, so that the letters may be ready to go early."

Jules Jelle was in a very different state. His rage was furious. Scarcely knowing what he was doing, he walked home; the cold air soothed him somewhat; but he was too desperately agitated to be able to regain command over himself; his thoughts, as he hurried up the Champs Élysées, were in an anarchy of passion. One idea only was clear to him; he was going to revenge himself on Yaransk. All the hate he had felt throughout his life seemed to him to have become concentrated on that one man; he half longed to tear him to pieces with his hands. His habitually disordered nature had become more reasonless than ever, under the influence of his recent paroxysms, and the sensation that battle was coming at last appeared to him, by comparison with all the rest, to be deliciously comforting. When he reached his own room, his very first act was to take down his swords and try them. He was a skilled fencer, was known as one of the "bonnes lames" of Paris, and was in perfect practice, for his habit was to pass an hour almost every day in a Salle d'Armes. He made several lunges, and laughed silently at the strength and suppleness of his wrist. After a while he sat down, and, as he sat, a vein of sudden sadness spread over him. The thought of Frieda came to him in a new form. He saw himself dead—killed by Yaransk. It might happen. What then? What would be the future relations between her and the Russian? At this question his fury came back to him almost more intoxicatingly than before; he staggered to his feet and cried—

"I *will* kill him! I *will* kill him! She shall not be left to him!"

Mechanically he threw off his clothes, got into bed, and, after a couple of hours of feverish agitation, fell heavily asleep.

A servant woke him at ten o'clock to say that two gentlemen had come to see him. Their cards bore the names of—

PRINCE GLATZOW.
COUNT GUY D'ATTEVILLE.

He put on a dressing-gown and hurried down.

"I beg you to excuse me," he exclaimed, as he entered the library. "I have overslept myself. You come, of course, on behalf of M. Yaransk. I have not had an instant yet to arrange with friends to represent me in this matter, but I hope that by noon my seconds may be able to get to you. Will you be so kind as to tell me where they can find you?"

An appointment was made, and Jules Jelle bowed out his visitors.

An hour later he had put the affair into the hands of General Allix and M. Henri Meulan (the former of whom was very experienced in duels), had told them that the quarrel admitted of no arrangement, and that he wished the meeting to take place, if possible, that afternoon. He returned to the Avenue Kléber to await news from them.

At one they came to tell him that no time had been lost in discussion; that everything had been arranged in a few minutes; and that, as the days were short, the encounter was fixed for three o'clock, in the woods of Meudon.

"Just time to get ready and drive there," said Jules Jelle.

"We had better take a doctor with us," observed the General. "The affair is serious, and there will be holes to patch. We will go and find some one, and will be back here in an hour with a hired carriage, so that your father's servants may know nothing about it. I will bring my swords."

When they had gone Jules Jelle looked out of the window. He was no longer violent; an attack of melancholy had come over him. His courage was perfect; he did not know what fear meant; he had been in many dangers without feeling his pulse beat; but yet, there was in his head a thought of parting, and it weighed on him. It drove the hate of Yaransk out of him for an instant and stood in him, by itself, alone in its dreariness.

He put his hands over his face, and murmured, "Frieda! Frieda!"

He thought of writing to her. Then he wondered whether he had better send a message to her through his aunt. Several other questions suggested themselves to him, more or less vaguely. But he did nothing, shook his head, and waited.

At two his friends came for him. As he left the house an unpleasant sensation passed through him; he asked himself if he would come into it again alive; he fancied he saw his own body carried in by four men. The impression did not endure, however, and he jumped into the carriage with a return of the longing to find himself face to face with Yaransk, each of them with a yard of steel in his hand.

They reached the point of rendezvous too soon, and had to wait some minutes before the other party arrived. As the ground was known to General Allix

(who had used it on previous occasions of the same nature), he led the seconds of the other side to an open piece of smooth grass, in a hollow well out of sight of any chance passers. They agreed that no better place could be desired.

Yaransk and Jules Jelle stood some distance apart, not looking at each other.

The choice of swords was tossed for, and then General Allix and Prince Glatzow approached the respective principals, saying, "En place."

Each pulled off his coat, waistcoat, and cravat, unbuttoned his shirt-collar and right wrist-band, and turned up his sleeve, leaving the arm bare to the elbow.

Each took the sword held to him by his second, and walked to the centre of the grass. There, at last, their eyes met.

Their expressions were alike, and yet different. In both their faces was deep hate; in both of them the lips were fiercely compressed, the pupils were distended, the lids were slightly closed; a deep fold between the brows produced in both the same savage frown; in both the bitterest enmity glared out. But while, in Jules Jelle, the stare was of pure abhorrence; in Yaransk, it was made up, for more than half, of intense contempt.

But the gaze had no time to last. As the two fell into their places, General Allix, senior of the four seconds, took the two swords, one in each hand, crossed them lightly, looked at them minutely to assure himself that they were in correct position, stepped back, and, gravely, dropped the words, "Allez, messieurs."

Instantaneously the two swords were clicking jarringly against each other, each groping for an opening in the other's guard. Each man had bent his right knee, and each was swaying, rapidly but lightly, up and down on it; for a few seconds the feet scarcely moved. Suddenly, Yaransk leaped lightly forward, with both feet at once; his point turned up and went, like a flash, at Jules Jelle's throat. But the other blade was there in time; the thrust was parried; Jules swung himself aside, and smiled fiercely. The recovery was instantaneous; in two seconds both men were in guard again, and again the restless clicking of the swords alone broke the anxious silence.

So far the advantage was rather with Jules Jelle; for, by a singular contradiction in the habitual attitudes of the two adversaries, it was he who seemed to retain self-control, while Yaransk was evidently too passionate.

Another minute passed in desperate fence. The equality of skill was so close that the intently watching seconds could prejudge nothing; the issue depended, manifestly, on accident. Neither man broke ground, except for a few inches; with lightning quickness they crouched, sprang up, and bent again; the voice of the grating steel and the shortening, hardening breathings of the combatants were the only distinct sounds.

All at once there was a wild rush together; they seemed almost to fling themselves on each other; a faint cry was heard; Yaransk, staggering three steps backwards, dropping as he staggered, fell headlong on his back.

The doctor sprang to him, knelt down, tore away

his shirt, and saw on his chest a small cut, from which blood was oozing.

"Lift him!" he cried quickly to Count d'Atteville. "Let me see if it has gone through him."

As they raised him a round red wet stain came in sight on the back of his shirt. It was needless to look further. He was dead.

In a thrust of such ferocity that he had lost the power of recovery, he had driven himself on to the other's blade, which had pierced his heart.

Jules Jelle stood still—pale, very upright, his eyes almost closed, dazed. He lifted his sword and watched, automatically, for some instants, a thin film of blood that dribbled slowly on it. Automatically again he dropped the point to the ground, gazed at the body of Yaransk lying eight feet off, walked slowly to it, stooped over the face, and murmured, as if speaking to it, "So—it was to end in this way. One of us had to die. We could not live on together."

General Allix drew him off, whispering, "Put on your coat at once and come away. His friends will carry him back. We can do no good here. Give me your sword."

As the carriage started, he went on—"You behaved very well. I suppose there will be a trial; but you will be acquitted. He spiked himself. We all saw that."

"Certainly, we all saw it," added M. Meulan, who, being less accustomed to such scenes, was a good deal upset.

Then they were silent.

A great distress came over Jules Jelle. He felt sick, and bared his head and throat for air. A con-

sciousness of wrong done seized hold of him. The cause of the duel, the motive that had led him to kill a man—a former friend—appeared to him to have been insufficient. Why had he done it? The presence of his seconds shamed him; they had seen him do it. Yet the words just used by General Allix were—"You behaved very well." Mechanically he asked, "Do you feel sure I am not to blame?"

"Absolutely certain," answered the General. "Nothing could be more correct than your conduct. He did it entirely himself. I had noticed that he was fighting ragingly, which is always dangerous; one or other of you had to get it. As for you, you demeaned yourself perfectly. You did not kill him; he killed himself. The other side will say the same. You will be acquitted."

As they entered Paris Jules Jelle looked, involuntarily, at his hand. The scene of three nights back rushed up with startling vividness before him. The hand that Yaransk had shaken before his eyes, the hand that had killed the German, was stiffening and chilling somewhere behind him on the road; on his own hand was the blood-mark now. Pushed by a strange impulse, he did what the other had done—he raised his hand and stared at it; but he did not find "consolation" in the sight of it. He shuddered, and felt afraid of it.

The carriage stopped at the house. General Allix recommended Jules to sit down quietly by the fire, and not to move.

"I dare say your nerves want settling a little," he continued. "These things do not happen every day, and, when they do occur, they are disagreeable. Do

you believe in homœopathy? If you do, you might take a few globules of belladonna; it is soothing. M. Meulan and I will go to the Commissary of Police to tell him, and to say that we are all at the disposal of the Juge d'Instruction, if he wants us. And I will see Prince Glatzow and arrange with him the terms of a note to send this evening to the papers. You have no reason to be anxious. I repeat that no one could have behaved more properly than you did. I am glad it was not you; I like to be on the winning side. Good-by. I will look in to-morrow to see how you are."

Jules Jelle did his best to follow the General's advice. He did sit down before the fire, and he tried to stay there. But there was fever in him; he could not stop still. The picture of Yaransk on his back, with the red mark on his naked chest, was everywhere around him. It was there before his eyes, whether he closed them or opened them. The night was falling, and the idea of darkness was unpleasant to him. His hand, too, became repulsive to him. He held it away from him, endeavored not to see it, and then, by moments, fixed his eyes on it with fascinated view.

Impulsively he stood up, and, with an unclear consciousness of what he was doing, hurried downstairs, left the house, and found himself, in a few minutes, at his aunt's door.

Madame Jelle was alone, in her own room. He entered in silence, sat down without speaking, and looked blankly at the fire.

At first his aunt did not see anything new or peculiar in this attitude. He was always strange, and

had been more than ever so of late. But, in watching him attentively, she observed that he was very white, that dark rings were round his eyes, that the corners of his mouth were twitching.

"What is the matter, Jules?" she asked, rather anxiously, coming to him, and making a movement to take his hand.

He snatched it away, crying almost frightenedly, "No, no, no; not that one."

"But, Jules, what is it?" she inquired, with alarm. "Surely there is something wrong."

"My aunt," he answered, slowly, "I have had a duel with Yaransk, and I have killed him."

"You have—killed Yaransk?" she screamed out. "Yaransk is—dead?"

"Yes—dead," was the dreamily spoken reply. "This hand killed him, two hours ago."

"Oh, Jules, Jules, how awful!" cried Madame Jelle, clasping her hands and trembling. "How awful!" She went on, excitedly, "The duel was about Frieda?"

"About her, and about other things."

"Great God! What will she say when she knows of it?"

A little afterwards she asked, nervously, "What are the details?"

With much disorder he told the story.

"What are we to do about Frieda?" repeated Madame Jelle several times, in deep anxiety, when she had heard all. "It is indispensable to tell her; the truth cannot be concealed from her. Poor child! Her entrance into this house has not brought her happiness—nor to me either. It is indeed fortunate that we are going away."

"I cannot go away," sighed Jules. "I have to stop here to be tried—if they want to try me."

"I was not speaking of you, but of her. You have to bear the consequences of your own acts; but she has to suffer from the acts of others. Oh, Jules, how terrible all this is! Yaransk killed by you! Have you told your father?"

"I have not seen him. I must explain it to him when I go back."

"Then go and do it. He ought not to be left to learn it from any one else. I pity you, my poor Jules. But I pity more still that unhappy girl upstairs. How shall I manage to tell her?"

With all her will and courage, Madame Jelle was frightened at the task before her. She shrank from it, not only from fear of the effect of the news on Frieda, but also from her own incapacity to determine how to approach the story, and how to tell it when she began it. The man Frieda loved had just been killed by her own nephew, whose love Frieda had rejected; there lay the special hardness of the position. And then there was the question of the "influence" which had been exercised on Frieda; what turn would it take under these new circumstances?

Still, painfully perplexing as it was, it had to be got through. So, after a few minutes of hesitation, Madame Jelle walked slowly up. At the door of Frieda's room her heart throbbed so strongly that she had to wait till it quieted down.

She found Frieda reading, or pretending to read. She stooped over her and kissed her, as she passed, and stood before the fire.

"Can you support bad news, my dear child?" she asked.

"Bad news? what bad news?" exclaimed the other, starting up. "Something in the air has seemed to be whispering to me this afternoon. What is it? Tell me, tell me."

"When I say bad news, I use the term that every one employs, in order to indicate that there is something painful to say—something, at least, something, I mean, which may be painful, according to the manner of taking it."

Frieda bent forward, and, with a scared look, gasped out, "Does it concern M. Yaransk?"

Madame Jelle nodded her head slowly.

"Is he ill? or," she cried, vehemently, "is he dead?"

The head nodded once more.

"Dead? He is dead?"

Her eyes dropped, her arms fell, she sighed out, very slowly, "Dead! He is dead!"

She looked up again, her face full of protesting doubt. "It is not true! It cannot be true! Say it is not true."

"It is true," murmured Madame Jelle, putting her arms round her. "Lean on me, dear child."

"Let me sit down," was all Frieda answered.

For a time she did not speak; she breathed quickly, but showed no other sign of agitation; she seemed stupefied.

"This gives us another reason for going away at once; you will need change now more than ever."

"Change?" echoed Frieda, in a husky voice, twisting her fingers into each other. "Yes, I shall need

change. You are right, my kind friend. Oh yes, I shall need change. And—so—he is dead! He, my master, is dead!"

Suddenly she raised her head, with a wild expression in her eyes, and cried, almost in a scream, "How did he die? Why did he die? When did he die? He was not ill. Was it an accident? Was he—was he—killed?"

Madame Jelle felt that the hardest part of her work was coming.

"Yes," she answered, watching Frieda's face; "he was killed—in a duel."

"Who killed him?" shrieked the girl, leaping once more to her feet, her eyes starting out of her head, her arms stretched out straight before her.

Madame Jelle was, for a moment, too affected to be able to reply.

"Who killed him, I say?" insisted Frieda, her voice dropping to a low harsh tone of horror, her stare fixed frantically on Madame Jelle. "Was it—was it—your nephew?"

Madame Jelle was unable to articulate; but her aspect and her attitude answered for her.

Frieda seemed to shrink within herself; her knees trembled; her hands clutched convulsively; her body stooped, her face fell forward, she glared almost insanely at Madame Jelle.

"So—because I loved him, he has killed him. Was that it?"

Still the other was silent.

The girl became still. She turned to the fire, looked down at it for a while, raised her head again, and moaned, drearily—

"A duel between those two, and *he* is dead! How strange! Did his power avail him for nothing?"

She went on, in a wandering manner—

"There was something floating round me; but it was not a message from him; there can be no message now; how can I ever know now whether he wants me?"

"Dearest child," whispered Madame Jelle, putting her arm round Frieda, who shuddered slightly at her touch, "the power is at an end. What has happened is very awful, but it may be for your good."

"For my good?" burst out Frieda, breaking away from her; "for my good? For my good that *he* is dead! It is for my destruction. I had found light—and I have lost it."

"Time will console you as it consoles all others. Besides, after all, he was almost a stranger to you. It was only a week ago yesterday that you saw him for the first time."

"A stranger to me? He was the fulfilment of my dream. He was the revelation to me of what a man may be. A stranger to me—*he?* Unknowingly, I had waited for him; he came; I recognized him; and he is dead. All that in a week! What a week! But," she asked again, as if incapable of believing, "is he really, really dead?"

The difficulty of the situation paralyzed Madame Jelle; her vigor deserted her completely; she felt as if she were herself responsible, in part at least, towards Frieda, and could not find a word to say.

"And your nephew?" exclaimed Frieda, with another sudden explosion. "Does he propose to show himself before me with that blood upon his hands?"

She shivered with horror as she spoke. Madame Jelle felt less and less able to deal with her.

"So—he is lying, alone, in a room at an inn, with nobody to watch him, nobody to pray for him!" went on Frieda.

Madame Jelle glanced at her suspiciously. The girl saw the look, understood it, and answered it.

"Oh, do not fear that I shall go to him! No, my place is not at his side; I know that. I shall do nothing to disgrace myself—or you. I shall think of him—lying there, white, and alone. But I shall not go to him."

"Frieda! Frieda!" cried Madame Jelle, appealingly, unable to bear more, "let me implore you not to give way like this. He did not love you; his only action on you was to make you suffer; your meeting with him has been a disaster to you. Struggle against the memory that holds you; set yourself free again and seek with me, not for any more will-influence, but for quiet happiness. Above all, do not mourn so passionately a man who has been nothing but an enemy to you."

"What!" burst out the other in a paroxysm of excitement. "What! You have the courage to reproach me with yielding to the very power that you begged me to exercise over yourself? You tell me to struggle against the domination of the very force that you so eagerly invoked for your own benefit? You, who were longing to subject yourself, in the mere pursuit of pleasure, to my will-influence, you urge me to set myself free from the influence of another—and that other dead? That is too much!"

"Do not reproach me; I cannot endure harsh words

from you. Do you think I am not the first to see, too late, alas! that I am the indirect author of all this? Do you think I do not lament the harm that, so unknowingly, I have brought about? Oh, if I had known!"

"Yes," answered Frieda, "if you had known—as you say—we should never have met; and I should not have met—*him*."

"But, can you suppose that I am not sad too? Do you imagine that this blow falls on you alone? Do you forget that I have reasons for deploring, almost more than you, the horrible calamity that has come about?"

Another revulsion seized Frieda. She recognized the truth of Madame Jelle's words, and saw that she herself had been unjust and unkind to her. Impulsively she cried—

"Forgive me. In the selfishness of my own distress, I am forgetting what I owe to you, and that you too are suffering. I will do my best to become calm. The shock was so violent, so abrupt. But—but, I cannot see your nephew; I can never look at him again."

"Let us leave Paris at once, Frieda."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Jules Jelle returned home he found his father at work with two clerks from the Ministry, and had to wait.

"The cares of State weigh heavily upon me," began the father, as soon as they were alone. "I do not disguise from you, my son, that the joys of office are less real than I supposed. The consciousness of superiority to other men is satisfying—that is true; but the fatigue of unceasing labor, at my age, is very wearing, and I do not find that my position is as dominating as I expected; there are still persons who persist in treating me as an equal. At moments I am positively sad; melancholy, I might say."

"I am sorry to hear that you are worried, for I have to tell you something that will pain you."

"Surely, she has not accepted you?" shouted the father, clasping his hands.

"No; she has not accepted me. I fear that she never will. It is not that. It is that I had a duel this afternoon, and . . ."

"Are you hurt, Jules?" exclaimed the other, stumbling to his feet in real emotion. "You look ill. Are you wounded?"

"No; it is not that either. My adversary was wounded—dangerously wounded. He is—dead."

"Dead? You killed him? My son has killed a man? How frightful! How awful! But—you are sure you are not hurt?"

"I am not even touched."

"Frightful! Awful! It is impossible for me to realize that a Jelle has killed a man; that my son has passed through the hideous sensation of homicide!"

"You may indeed call it hideous," sighed the son.

"Who was it?"

"An old friend; a friend that once I loved; but who had become an enemy. It was Yaransk."

"Yaransk? It was Yaransk? Your cherished friend? More awful still! My head turns round. But, Jules, you will be tried! A Jelle will appear before the Justice of his country—like any ordinary criminal! Fearful! Fearful!"

"I could not help it. He rushed on to my sword."

"Pray tell me the details, the full details. Do not spare me; I, your father, must know all."

After listening to the broken story told by Jules, he went on—"My distress is cruel. You are indeed right to say that you cause me pain. I tremble. You will be tried, I say! You, the son of a Minister! You, my secretary! There will be a scandal throughout the land. I may have to resign my portfolio in consequence."

"If I could bring him to life again, I would; notwithstanding all that has passed between us."

"Have you forgotten, Jules," continued the father, beginning to recover from the shock, and to relapse into his customary vain-glory, "that I would not fight Trullet, in order to avoid passing for a gladiator in the eyes of France? And yet you, my son, do this! The idea that you killed a man, while I was at the Chamber sitting calmly on the Ministerial

bench, is altogether deplorable. Does your aunt know it?"

"I have been to tell her."

"What does she say?"

"She is deeply grieved."

"Grieved is not the word to use; it expresses nothing. The damage to the position of the Jelles may be irreparable. Public opinion will condemn us; and we depend on public opinion. It is a misfortune, a very serious misfortune. Misfortunes ought not to happen to the Jelles. I see no advantage of any kind that can result from it. By the way, though," he interrupted himself, "an idea strikes me. The event may perhaps enable us to renew negotiations with the Trullets; that would be an advantage; we might use all this as an explanation of your refusal to go on with the marriage. Yes, we might send word to them, through some mutual friend, that you were too honorable a man to make the young lady your wife while a sanguinary duel was hanging over your head; but that, now that it is over, you are ready and willing to carry out your engagements."

"I am neither ready nor willing."

"At this moment, of course not. How could you be? After killing a man, both readiness and willingness must be somewhat paralyzed. But, when the impression has worn off, we will see."

"It is some consolation to me in all this," remarked Jules, bitterly, "to perceive that, after all, I do not cause you as much pain as I anticipated."

"The pain is great; I might describe it as extreme; almost, indeed, as unspeakable. But, as you are aware, it is my constant principle to see what good

I can extract from whatever happens; even from the most cruel misfortunes. I presume there will be a publication of some kind in the newspapers with reference to this—misfortune?"

"The seconds are to send a note to the press."

"So that to-morrow morning," observed the father, pompously, "the nation will learn that Jules Jelle, son and secretary of the Minister for Docks and Steamboats, has been engaged in a mortal duel. I must prepare the language I will use respecting this historical fact to the President of the Republic and to my colleagues in the Cabinet; that language must be worthy of the occasion and of myself. As for you, my son, my unfortunate son, it seems to me that complete calm is desirable—sleep, even, if possible. Your nerves must be affected—for your temperament, like mine, is highly strung; you have inherited the delicacy of my organization. Seek repose. This evening I will remain in the solitude of thought. To-morrow I will face the judgment of the nation upon our act. For the moment, I am quite upset. The shedding of blood has entered into the history of the Jelles! It is true that in the history of all great families there is much shedding of blood. Yet that analogy does not console me. I repeat that I am quite upset."

Next morning the duel was the talk of Paris. People crowded to the Avenue Kléber to ask for news and details. Jules refused to see any one; but his father received all visitors, without distinction, and assured them that "We are deeply afflicted. My son and I are deeply afflicted. I am deeply afflicted. We feel—I feel—that we are not to blame, that it

was a lamentable misfortune. He rushed on to our—I mean my son's—sword. But we are most deeply afflicted."

After a couple of hours' talk of this sort Jacques Jelle had become almost convinced that it was he himself who had killed Yaransk; and, on the whole, began to feel some pride in it.

After breakfast Madame Jelle drove up.

"You know that I detest coming to this house," she told Jules, "but circumstances are stronger than my dislike. First of all, how have you got through the night?"

"Badly. I am very miserable."

"So am I; I am ill. I cannot thrust the thought out of my head; and the scenes I have with Frieda are cruel."

"Is she much affected?" inquired Jules Jelle, anxiously.

"She is becoming quieter, but is still in a most agitated condition. The force that has been set to work upon her was prodigious. I am afraid she will be a long while getting over it. Of course there is no possibility of any meeting between you and her. I am sure she regards you as a murderer."

Jules Jelle looked despairingly at his aunt.

"Well," she went on, "I presume that this will steady you. You have brought into your own life an ineffaceable remorse, and into mine much care and pain. How I have got to love that girl as I do I cannot explain; but I can never part from her. My existence with her will be sad, for a time at all events; but I suspect that, when sadness is cheered by affec-

tion, there is a very real sweetness in it. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, my aunt; no one can do anything for me. I have only to suffer on."

"Then say good-by to me. We leave to-night. That is, in reality, what I have come to tell you."

Jules started. "You leave to-night?" he echoed. "Then . . ." He stopped himself, and added only, "Write to me. Give me hope—if you can. Adieu!"

A week afterwards Madame Jelle and Frieda were sitting in a garden at Nice. For some time they had not spoken. Each was gazing wistfully at the sea.

"The spectacle of distance is a strange aid to melancholy," said Frieda, at last. "Until I beheld the sea I did not know the aspect of distance; I felt it only as a mental fancy. To-day I have it clearly before me in two of its many shapes; the measurable distance to which my sight can travel across the waves; the unmeasurable distance which stands in between the living and the dead."

"And I, Frieda, have learned to know it in another of its forms. I have discovered, through you, how vastly far it is from an empty heart to a full one; from the illusory excitements of imagination to the solid satisfaction of affection. If you can ever see that distance as I see it now, the tie between us will grow stronger still."

At Florence Madame Jelle got letters telling her that, after the preliminary inquiry about the duel, proceedings against Jules had been abandoned, on

the ground that no blame could be imputed to him, and that he had left for a long journey in Central Asia; also, that there had been a stormy sitting in the Chamber, that the new Ministry had been turned out, and that Jacques Jelle, disgusted with the fickleness of fortune, had retired to his *château* in Picardy.

Frieda continued to be very depressed, very much absorbed in thought; but, as the weeks passed by, her manner grew almost tranquil; she showed no more violence, and sometimes even looked with interest at the sights around her. No allusion was made by either of them to Yaransk.

One day when, after slow travelling, they had reached Sorrento, and were sitting in the sunlight, Frieda took the hand of Madame Jelle and said, "The time has come to speak to you. I shall never forget him. The impression has been so tremendously intense that it seems to me impossible to shake it off. Its mark is on my life. You were seeking; I have found. His contact has opened out to me new conceptions, not only of the latent forces at our disposal, and of the influence of those forces on our relations with each other, but also of the possible nature of the tie called love. The love that has arisen in me for him is of a kind that my imagination had not conceived; there is no passion in it, and but little of mere woman's feeling; it is the homage of the ignorant for the wise, the clinging of the weak to the strong, the obedience of the inferior to the superior; and, alas! it is now the unhoping fidelity of the living to the dead. Still, although I am and shall be the submissive creature of that strange love—I only call it love

for want of a truer name—I think I can declare to you, after much examination of myself, and after long hesitation in order to avoid the risk of deceiving you, that he has put nothing into me beyond the knowledge of what love may be, and of what will is. You need not fear that you will discover some day an evil change in me resulting from his 'infusion.' On the contrary, I am distinctly conscious that my inner value has been increased by his dominating presence within me, and I have confidence that, with the aid of that presence, I shall rise steadily in moral strength. Above all, kind friend, the shock has made me see, with vivid clearness, the duty that I owe to *you*. The whole tenderness of my dreams, the whole gratitude of my reality, will be given henceforth, by my saddened heart, to you alone."

In the evening, for the first time since she had met Yaransk, Frieda wrote a long letter to Canon Müller.

There stands the story. As all this happened only yesterday, there is no more to tell.

THE END.